

THE
LADY
FROM
L.U.S.T.



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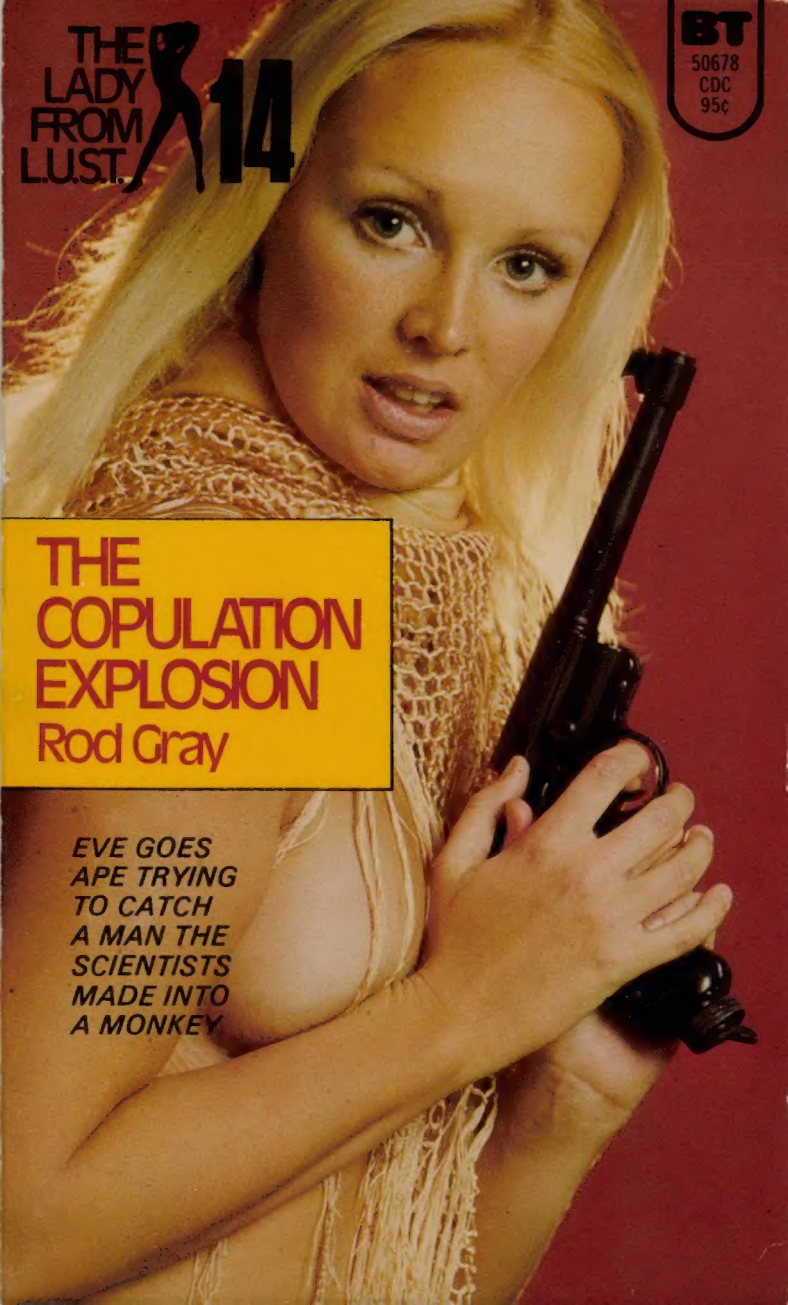
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THE COPULATION EXPLOSION

Rod Gray

EVE GOES
APE TRYING
TO CATCH
A MAN THE
SCIENTISTS
MADE INTO
A MONKEY



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SHEER DYNAMITE!

We made an interesting little tableau in the bathroom mirror once I wiped the mist off the glass. There was I, all pink skin and golden hair, nicely curved and with my breasts dancing lightly to my every move, pinned in front of David whose huge, tanned body was quite hairy and bulging with muscles. Since my behind was to his front, only I knew for sure that he was all man—and very excited. . .

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**THE LADY FROM
L.U.S.T. #14:**

**THE
COPULATION
EXPLOSION**

by Rod Gray

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FOREWORD

He was born in absolute darkness.

His senses told him that he lay on a table in a room with metal walls. His eyes were closed, so he did not understand how it was he knew this fact. Thought came into his mind. There was a name he went by, but he could not remember it. He had undergone a strange experience; he had almost died.

His eyes opened. He was still in darkness, but he was not blind. His eyes—someone had done something to his eyes as well as to the rest of his body—saw strange colors in the darkness, a deep blue where the metal was, and another color for the glass prism overhead.

He swung to a sitting position on the table, trying to remember what had happened to him. He could not. It was as if the experience had dulled the memory sectors of his brain. He slid to the metal floor, standing erect. He drew several deep breaths into his lungs and felt the life stirring through his body.

His was not human life, though he was a human being.

He was—something else. Un-human? Yes, Un-human.

The darkness pressed in on his eyes with its eerie colors. The colors he seemed vaguely to understand, the reason why metal should look like dark blue, the way glass appeared as a clear color for which he had no name. He swayed slightly, putting a hand to his head.

Under his fingertips he felt hair, a lot of hair. His hand moved across his face, finding that it was clean-shaven. It was rimmed with stiff hairs, like the features of a golden langur surrounded by a bristly hide with only its face hairless. His ears were different, too. Longer and more pointed, they were like those of a fox, jutting slightly upward and outward from his skull. His ears were very sensitive. They were antennae catching sounds that were inaudible to all other hearing organs on this planet. His hand went across his chest. More hair, shaggy hair, as if he were a Neanderthal Man. He made a whimpering sound deep in his throat.

There it was again, the voice!

Inside his head, not speaking to him. No, the voice was not quite a voice, there was no sound. All he was hearing was a thought. The thought came to him only at intervals, as if it were not being thought all the time.

Not far, now. Not far at all!

The thought went away.

He lurched forward toward the metal wall, his hands outstretched. His palms touched the cool metal, his fingertips slid back and forth. Along this metal wall, there was a way out of this room. He did not know how he knew this, he just knew it.

After ten minutes he found the door.

It was locked.

He who was un-human felt anger surging through his hairy body. With both hands he gripped the protruding thing that an inner knowledge told him was a knob. Angrily he wrenched on it, tugging and pulling. He made low growls in his throat as he yanked.

There were great muscles rolling beneath his hairy hide. Massive muscles, muscles no human being should have, unless . . .

Unless, what? He knew! Deep inside he knew the answer why he was here, hairy and strong. There was a reason, but he could not put his finger to it. It was like

a forgotten dream, in a sub-conscious part of him, swimming deep but never coming to the surface.

kraaaak

He held the knob in his hand. It had broken off. Numbly he stared at it. Then he looked at the blackness where the metal door should be.

He growled low in his throat. With the flat of his hand he hit the door. And the door remained firm. The Un-human thought. He moved to the table. He shoved the table before him at a run. His muscles tightened seconds before the table hit the door. There was a deafening crash.

The door buckled outward.

Light came into the metal room, blinding the thing that had been a man. His forearm lifted across his eyes. He waited until his eyes became accustomed to the light. Then he walked out into the corridor.

A being in a uniform was staring at him, horror etched on his face. The Un-human walked toward the guard, putting out a hand—noticing in the overhead light that his forearm and the back of his hand was covered with thick golden hairs—as if to tell the hairless man to wait, that he wanted to speak to him.

He tried to talk, but he could make only a dull croak in his throat. The guard shouted, turned his back and ran.

He went after the guard so fast that he was beyond the man in three strides, and then he was crashing into the far wall. He bounced off the wall and fell to the floor. He was surprised that he had run so fast. He should not have been able to move at such speed. It was as if—as if. . . .

His tufted brows met in a frown.

There it was again, that sense of knowing, yet not knowing. He turned his head. The guard lay on the floor, unconscious.

The Un-human got to his feet and walked along a

corridor until he reached a staircase. He stopped to study the treads. He did not remember ever having seen anything like stairs before. Yet he put a foot on the first step and mounted the others until he was standing before a glass door.

The glass made a shimmering, unknown color. His hand touched the glass, ran over and around that color. His hand balled into a fist. With his fist he shattered the glass and stepped through it into another corridor.

In the distance there was a metallic ringing.

He paid no attention to the alarm gong. He just kept on walking, hunting for a path out of this place which had been his prison and could hold him no longer.

He heard voices, the sound of drumming feet. Instinct told him he must not be put back in that dark room, that there was a need for him—outside. Somewhere beyond this prison was a—something—that demanded his presence.

Guards came running for him, shouting and waving their arms. He could read the horror in their faces as they looked at him.

He ran forward, lowering his head.

The Un-human hit the three guards like a runaway express train. They flew in three different directions while he raced on, never slackening his pace. He had no reason to look back, he knew the beings were unharmed, except for a few bruises. He must get out, and they would have stopped him.

He came to other stairs and went up.

Ahead of him was a large room filled with objects he did not understand. Beyond the room was another pair of glass doors. The room was well lighted. Beyond the glass doors there was more light, and on the other side of those floodlamps there was another kind of darkness.

He ran across the room.

A girl in a uniform resembling that of the guards was rounding a corner when she caught a glimpse of his

speeding body. She screamed, mouth wide open, tongue quivering between her glistening white teeth.

He hit the glass doors and went through them in a shower of splintering shards. The broken glass did not cut him, he was through those pieces and racing for the cool blackness beyond the floodlights before they began to fall.

The girl was lying in a huddled heap at the edge of the building lobby, having fainted. There was no one to see him as he sped over a blacktop parking lot to disappear into the shadows beyond the trees that rimmed the building compound.

The Un-human ran and ran.

He was frightened. There was something wrong. He should not be fleeing like a wild animal this way. He ought to turn back and let those beings in uniforms tell him what to do.

The trouble was he could not understand them, and they could not understand him. Those sounds they made were familiar, he himself should be able to make sounds like that, but he could not. He felt he might be incomplete, but there was no time for completeness. *No time! No time!*

He slowed after a while.

He was loping along a flat stretch of ground. Overhead, there was a ball in the sky that gave down radiance by which his eyes could see. There was a name for that object, but he could not recall it.

The Un-human came to a stop.

There was a sound, there was a smell. He turned aside off the flat ground and began to climb in among the piled rocks. He climbed swiftly, easily, as if he were in his element in the darkness on this side of the mountain. In minutes he was on a higher slope, pursuing the tantalizing smell.

When he saw the brook he sniffed again. Yes, that pale stuff was the smell he followed. It would be good,

that pale stuff running along over those white bottom stones. He needed it.

He lay down on his belly and leaned his face out over the little brook. In the moonlight he caught a glimpse of his face before he lowered his lips to the water and lapped.

The water tasted good.

CHAPTER ONE

I was suspicious from the very beginning.

David Anderjanian had sent me a dozen American Beauty roses and a little note asking me for a dinner date at a posh supper club on upper Fifth Avenue. He had also delivered a bottle of champagne to my apartment, to be placed on ice for his arrival. I was to wear an evening gown; he would be wearing a tuxedo.

This was not at all like David Anderjanian. In fact, it was such contrary conduct that I came damn near calling him up and telling him to go to hell. In my long experience with my case officer—I am a secret agent for the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists, or L.U.S.T.—I have found him to be at his sweetest just before clobbering me with the dirtiest job around.

To rate a con job this good, he must have something slimey up his sleeve to give me before the night was over. I was right in a way—in my wildest imaginings I couldn't have guessed what that job was going to be.

My name is Eve Drum. I consider myself a slick chick, a mod bod, a hep cat. My nickname in L.U.S.T. is Oh Oh Sex, and many's the time I've proved my right to it. At that moment I was between cases, and while I keep my ear pretty much to the ground, I had no inkling of what was waiting for poor little me.

However, I decided to be brave about it.

I got all nice and naked in my bath, studying myself from all angles in the door length mirror. My neat

breasts were full and firmly packed, they stood out like milky melons tipped with overripe strawberries. I jiggled them a little with my hands, thinking how I would torment David this way before the night was out. I owed him. Even before I knew why it was I was going to get even with him, I was planning how.

My hips are gently curved. They swing when I walk in that style called *faire des effets de cul* by the French—which means that my behind adds its little jiggle to the rest of me. I would slip on cut-out panties over these hips. You know the kind, with the essential part of them left out, the better to bring out the true gold of my female fluff. Maybe a garterbelt. No, definitely a garterbelt, because I had some triple sheer gun-metal nylons that would make dear David drool when I crossed my gams so he could see my pale thighs and the black garters that held them up.

I am *not* a tease!

I just wanted to make sure my case-officer-plus-boy-friend suffered somewhat for what he was going to do to me. My feminine intuition is rarely wrong. Anderjanian was going to slap me silly with an assignment that would add years to my life. I wanted him to remember me as I was before I began aging.

My hand turned the shower waters on. I stepped inside the glass walls and slid a bar of soap all over the girl goodies. I would tint myself with perfume after the bath, do up my eyelids green with maybe a sprinkle of sequins across them as well, and don my extra-long fake eyelashes, add a few brush strokes of liquid lipstick and some body powder for what little of me would not be hidden by my dress, and I would be ready.

Oh, David! Poor David! What I have in store for you!

I dawdled over my dressing until the doorbell rang. I ran out of my satin and toile bedroom across the deep

pile carpeting of my living room wearing the divided panties, garterbelt with gun-metal nylons and my evening slippers. Like that, I opened the door.

David was standing there grinning at me. His grin got wider and his eyes round as he took me in. Oh, yeah. My heart sank when I saw the five pound box of candy in his hand. Now I *knew* I was in for trouble.

"Come in, come in," I carolled gaily.

He came in as I shut the door. I crowded my bod up against his, flinging my bare arms about his neck and letting my nipples scratch themselves on his jacket. I plastered my open mouth on his lips.

Just as his arms were about to close on me, I slid back and away from him. "Gotta finish dressing, darling!"

"Eve, wait!"

"Be right back, angel."

I was topless and practically bottomless as well in those panties. I turned and fled back toward my bedroom, knowing damn well that he was ogling my shaking buttocks. Good! I wanted him in a state before we got going. It would prolong his amoral agony for him to sit through a meal with my image dancing around in his head.

My original see-through St. Laurent was laid out on the bed, all ready for me to scoop it up and slither it over my curves. I bent over to do just that, when I felt David right behind me. His hands went to my hips and then his loins pressed into my behind.

My plan was working perfectly. David was as erotically aroused as I'd ever known him to be. I nudged him with my back cheeks and heard him moan.

"Damn you, Eve!"

"Why, darling! What seems to be the trouble?"

"You're the trouble. You know we have reservations for eight-thirty."

"And it's only quarter to. We've plenty of time."

"That isn't what I meant."

I giggled, moving my hips. "Never before the fish, m'sieu. Besides, I'm hungry. We don't have time even for a quickie, love."

"I'm more than hungry. I'm starving—for you."

That's the way I like my boyfriend. Utterly anxious. I reached behind me and gave him a gentle squeeze. "Well! You really *are* on a starvation diet, aren't you? How did that happen?"

"I've been busy," he growled.

I wriggled away from him and into my chiffon see-through with the ostrich fluff about my hips. It was an eye-popper. This was the first time I'd worn it, and David swallowed three times, slowly, as his eyes went over me inside it.

"Take it off," he groaned.

"David," I squealed. "Control yourself!"

"I mean," he began over again, then closed his eyes. "Oh, never mind. I should have known, this being your last night and all."

The dog! Now it was his turn to tease.

"What last night? What are you talking about?"

"Sorry, honey. It just slipped out."

"Like hell it did. You tell me what's in that animal brain of yours, David Anderjanian, or I'll let something else slip out." My eyes went to his buffing stick that was making itself known in no uncertain way.

"Later," he said hopefully.

I eyed him, he eyed me. We have worked and fought and loved together too long not to know one another almost perfectly. I smiled faintly and arched my neatly trimmed eyebrows.

"Truce?" I whispered.

"Yeah," he growled, and reached for my mink cape.

We went out of my posh apartment and into the elevator. The doorman had a cab waiting for us. I frowned, despite the lines it made in my forehead. My

case officer is rarely so solicitous of me. *Brotherrrrr*, I thought wryly, *he really has a toughie for me.*

There was a table under muted lighting close to the dance floor of the supper club, with a reserved card on it. A waiter bowed us to the spotless cloth on which was set a small bowl of flowers. David held my chair and I slid into it.

"We shall dine first," he said solemnly, "on martini cocktails, double strength. And with them, a serving of *pâté de canard.*"

My jaw dropped. "Darling," I breathed. "I didn't know."

"I want you to remember tonight," he told me with a smile. "It is something very special."

Then it hit me. "You're going to propose!"

He grinned, the bastard! "Well, not exactly. I have something else in mind."

"You can't be going to make me a proposition. Not after what you and I have done together . . . really, David! You have me all over goose bumps."

The waiter came back with the *pâté de canard* and the double-strength martinis. I sipped. I drank. I ate a little of the *pâté*.

"Tell me, David," I wheedled.

"Coax me later," he murmured, "at your pad."

"I will, I will indeed," I promised grimly.

We dined on duckling *en casserole* that almost melted in our mouths. We made light talk, skirting around the edges of a quarrel which neither of us wanted. I selected a pastry from the wagon and a waiter came and made Irish coffee for us with much twisting of the wrists and delicate pourings of coffee and brandy, topped with a spoon-splash of whipped cream.

"Pounds," I muttered.

"You'll take them off."

"Doing what?"

He sipped the Irish coffee. "Tell you when I'm ready."

"You're always ready," I grumbled.

"A compliment to you, my dear."

His eyes were seeing through my see-through dress about where a brassiere should have been. He sighed and his eyes beamed. Grudgingly, I told myself I ought to feel complimented. Under the table I kicked off a slipper and lifting my right foot, placed it across his lap.

"My goodness! You really are ready."

"Your goodness—hah—has nothing to do with it."

"My goodies, then," I amended.

"We-ell. . ."

This was my cue to reach for my gloves and hand-bag. David came around the table, lifting my mink stole, draping it over my shoulders. No sense in teasing the dear boy too much. Besides, I wanted to know why he was being so fabulous. I walked ahead of him with my hips swaying with just the right amount of sexy come-on. He came on, all right. I couldn't have lost him if I'd wanted to.

In the taxi, I wrapped arms about him and put my wet lips, open, to his wet lips, open. We clung like a couple of love-in limpets, our tongues darting and twisting. I love the big gom, and I really think he loves me, after his own fashion. Anyhow, he responded to my physical attractions with a certain physical attraction of his own.

My hand assessed his male strength very gently through his trousers. Poor dear! He was in such a state. He shook all over to the touch of my fingers. A little devil inside me gibbered, *Good! He won't be able to refuse you whatever you want to know, in a little while.* I cooed and purred into his lips.

The taxi drew to a halt. I had to get out first at David's insistence, since he wanted to hide himself from

the world with me in front of him. He shoved a five dollar bill at the cabbie, told him to keep the change. Well! He certainly was in a hurry!

He wrapped his arms about me in the elevator and went on kissing me. My upper thigh nudged him this way and that as I pressed against him, keeping him bubbling. I thought he was going to explode when I took his big hand and guided it under my miniskirt and along my bare thigh above my stocking top to the divided panties.

When the elevator door opened I ran for my apartment door with my twitching rump telling him to follow me if he wanted to discover treasures. He came after me like a galloping bull who'd been teased beyond endurance.

"Help yourself to the pinch bottle," I carolled as I went into my posh suite.

"I'd rather help myself to something else," he grinned, walking stiffllegged toward the small mahogany bar that decorates a corner of my big living room.

I tossed my mink coat one way, my Gucci bag another. I twirled in the middle of the carpeting, arms high. "Darling, undress!" I called.

David grinned at me from the bar where he was reaching for the glass he'd filled with ice and Haig and Haig scotch. "You first," he laughed.

My head shook back and forth. "It's always me that strips, I want to see how you look naked. Go on, tempt me."

He brought my drink to me. I put my hands on his jacket, pulled it off. I undid the buttons of his Gant shirt and pulled the shirttails out of his trousers. Inside a minute, I had him down to his shorts. These I tugged down gently, baring his eagerness.

"I dig that," I giggled.

"You have it all wrong, sweet. *That* digs you!"

"Jokes yet! All right, David. Now 'fess up. What's

the reason for all this wonderful treatment? I mean, you never treated me so royally before. Roses, champagne, a marvelous dinner. Why, David?"

His face got grim. I got scared. There was something here I didn't like. He said, "Later. In the bed, after we do a little digging."

My eyebrows went up. I still tried to put a light face on the situation, but my girlish curiosity wouldn't be denied any longer. I sipped the scotch, I put it down. My fingers went to the hem of the miniskirted St. Laurent and lifted. My nylons and bare thighs came out into the electric light, then my divided panties and my hard-nippled breasts.

David got even bigger, staring at me.

"Tell me, darling," I wheedled, moving closer to him, slipping my arms about his middle. "Or else I won't be able to concentrate on my bedwork."

His eyes fell to his glass. He said softly, "I'm going to lose you, honey."

I didn't get it. "How can you lose me? I'm here and we more or less love each other."

"Not that way. In L.U.S.T., I mean."

I drew back as much as his arms would allow me, trying to ignore that part of him poking me between my thighs. My eyebrows scowled. "You mean I've been fired? The General's written me off?"

The General is the boss-man for the entire League of Underground Spies and Terrorists. I work with and for David Anderjanian, but he's only my case officer. The big shot of L.U.S.T. is The General.

"No, no. You're our best operative. It's something else. The authorities think you should be transferred to Science Division."

"Out of International? No more spy stuff?"

"Well, they need you in Science, or so they say."

I wailed, "I'm no scientist, I don't know a damn

thing about science. David, you can't let them do this to me."

He would have spread his hands, I was sure, except that his hands were busy caressing the bare cheeks of my behind where they jutted out of the open part of my divided panties. He was caressing them so nicely that I was starting to lose interest in my future with L.U.S.T.

"I have nothing to say about it. The General makes all decisions like that. He told me to come here and break the news."

I rested my cheek against his hairy chest. "And you broke it very sweetly, David. Thank you. But what kind of spot can they possibly have for me in Science Division?"

"Well, for starters, there's the Un-human."

"How's that again?"

"That's the name they've given the monster they created in the Bionics Research Institute up in northern Pennsylvania."

My brows wrinkled. "You mean it's some kind of Frankenstein's monster?"

"I suppose you could say that."

David was hoisting me up by my buttocks, teasing himself and me by nudging his phallus in and around my Venus boskage. He was getting to me where I lived, and I was shivering steadily with anticipation. It was getting harder to talk, to concentrate on what he was telling me.

"You see," he went on dreamily, "bionics is the science which deals with the ability of man to duplicate Nature. In other words, what Nature has done for the gorilla in giving him his fantastic strength, or the cheetah its speed, bionics is attempting to do for people."

"But why?"

"It's part of the space program, actually. You know about cyborgs—for *cybernetic organism*—that the

space program has been working on, men fitted out with electrodes and other attachments to control heart-beat, body temperatures and such, so that man can move about on distant and different planets when we get to them.

"Well, bionics is attempting to do these cyborgs one better by making a man who will have such special qualities in his body—adapted from the animals—that he'll be able to survive on planets that might kill ordinary human beings."

His male strength was nudging my *dulcedo amoris*, as the old Romans called it, that particular part of the female's sex apparatus that gives her the thrill chills. There was a roaring in my ears. I couldn't hold back.

My left leg rose as my right foot raised itself on its toes. David knew what I was after, he felt my hand reaching bodily. His knees bent, so that I could lift up and drink him in. His hands under my behind helped, raising me until I was at the proper height.

I sank downward onto him.

"Don't you—want to—hear more?" he gasped.

"Later, later," I breathed.

My hips jerked. David groaned. My hips went a little faster. He gasped and his fingers tightened in my *gluteus maximus*. My stockinged legs came up to clamp about his loins. He supported my weight with his hands while I let myself go in this *el keurchi* position of the Arab erotologists. David was a big, strong guy, he could stand here and let my *zirab* go wild on his *zubb*. His body shook from time to time as his pleasure became more intense. My hips slowed their pumping motion, began to circle.

"Hadn't we better—go into the bedroom?" he panted.

"So walk, David. Walk!"

He walked, and the resultant stirring of his *zubb* inside my *zirab* made me wail out my pleasure long

before he reached the bedroom door. I hung on him and let my hips pound out a savage rhythm. David leaned against the door jamb for support as I finished us both off in a private maelstrom of grunts and gasps and groans.

We shook for a full minute together, like leaves in a gale. When I came out of the orgasmic phase and into the afterglow, I found my teeth buried in his shoulder, my fingernails in his back.

I dismounted, leaned my head against his chest.

"The shower," I breathed, "but not yet. Just hold me."

Our hearts slowed a little, our body flushes faded out. Our tensions flowed away. We were in that euphoria of satiation the sexologists call 'the resolution phase'. It was great. I just wanted to stay here forever.

David kissed the top of my head. "I have to take you to the airport at nine tomorrow, honey. It's getting late and you need some sleep."

I stirred, feeling the knife going in. "Airport? What airport?"

"To Valley Rill."

"What's in Valley Rill?"

"The monster. The guy who used to be Kenneth Frost."

I considered that, leaning against his chest. After a time I murmured, "Maybe you'd better begin at the beginning. I have the feeling I've lost you somewhere along the line."

"His name was Kenneth Frost. He was one of the bionics engineers at the research institute. The doctors gave him about six months to live, so he donated his body to the Institute. He wanted them to work on him while he was still alive, using their latest bionic techniques. He was a bachelor, he had no relations, he was beholden to nobody. And he believed very strongly in the program."

I took his hand and lead David toward the bathroom.

Turning on the shower water, I slipped out of my divided panties and hose, adding my garterbelt and shoes to the little pile. Then I pulled my case officer into the cascading waters with me. I reached for the soap, began lathering his chest.

"Go on talking, darling," I breathed.

The bionics engineers—there were two main ones, Adrian Trent and a Rhea Parker—were happy to get a human being to inject with their amino acids and various parts of different animals. They worked on Kenneth Frost for close to two years, prolonging his life span.

"When they were done with him, he had all sorts of changes built into his bodily structure. Rhea Parker made up a poem about him: *Eye of frog and sense of snake, speed of cat and strength of ape, do Kenneth Frost a monster make.* She meant it as a joke at the time, because Frost was still—human."

A week ago something had gone wrong.

Kenneth Frost had died.

They had sorrowed over him, but they had been grateful. Having had his body to experiment on added vastly to their knowledge.

My soapy fingers ran around his lower belly. David was showing signs of interest in my own soapy body. "If he died, what's the problem? Where do I come in?"

"He came back to life!"

I paused, not quite believing what he was saying. "How's that again?"

"Nobody knows how it happened. They put his body in a cold storage room. He came back to life or out of a coma or whatever it was that they'd mistaken for death—and escaped.

"Rhea Parker and Adrian Trent went looking for him on Big Stone Mountain. He saved them both from a cougar, snapping its spine with his hands, but he

wouldn't listen to their calls to wait and let them talk to him. He fled off into the night. The two scientists went back to the Institute, a bit dazed. You see, Kenneth Frost had somehow—evolved? Is that the word? Anyhow, he'd changed into what looked like a huge man-bear with golden fur all over his seven foot body."

"You're putting me on!"

"No, no. The man has become something—un-human!"

"But more surprises were in store for the two bionics engineers. When they returned to the Institute, they found a woman waiting there who called herself—Mrs. Kenneth Frost."

He had me so interested in his story I almost forgot about his big *zubb* that my hands were soaping. "But you said he was a bachelor!"

"Will you listen? And—stop that!"

I smiled down at his extension. "How can you concentrate on something unhuman when you're so marvelously human, David?"

"It takes concentration. Which *you* don't have."

I leaned my hard nipples against his chest and moved them around, making sudsy bubbles. "I have other things, darling."

His hands gathered me in so I nestled skin to skin with him. His hands went down my back with soap. Those big palms and long fingers ran over my soft buttocks, and when he slid one bit finger along my cheeks crease, I shivered delightfully.

"Anyhow, this Pamela Frost, this lady who claimed to have been married to Kenneth Frost, went out to look for him. Oh I know, I know. Denning and Trent were just as surprised as you. Kenneth Frost always said he was a bachelor. This was a real bolt out of the blue."

My fingers worked along David's personal big bolt. He was starting to shiver with the thrills chasing up and

down his elongation and its two attachments. He growled softly, "How can I concentrate on what I'm telling you if you're going to do that?"

"I haven't the slightest," I giggled.

"I give up. I know when I'm licked."

"Now that's an idea," I murmured.

His hand reached for the shower faucet. A stream of warm water deluged us, washing away the soap and the sudsy bubbles. David pushed me out onto the bath mat, grabbing a fluffy Cannon. He began to work me over, drying my skin. When he was done, I caught up another towel and dried him off.

We made an interesting little tableau in the bathroom mirror once I wiped the mist off the glass. There was I, all pink skin and golden hair, nicely curved and with my breasts dancing lightly to my every move, pinned in front of huge David whose tanned body was quite hairy and bulgy with muscles. Since my behind was to his front, only I knew for sure that he was all man and very excited.

"Tell me more," I smiled at his reflection.

"You little teaser! All right, I will.

"They found Pamela Frost at the bole of a tree. At first they thought she was dead. They carried her back to the Institute hospital and put her to bed. She recovered quite rapidly, with really nothing much more than bruises and scratches to show where he'd lifted and thrown her against a tree trunk. Oh, yes. And her right hand was crushed."

"Crushed?"

"She said her husband grabbed her there and squeezed. Remember, this Un-human now has the strength of a gorilla, at least. Or so those bionics engineers claim."

"Brrrrr," I shivered. "Wouldn't want to meet him in a dark alley!"

"How about a dark woods?"

"Not that, either."

"Too bad," sighed David. "Because that's your assignment."

I tried to whirl around and confront him but his hands kept me right where I was. I yelled, "David Anderjanian, are you out of your skull? I'm no animal trainer! What do you think I can do against something like that?"

"Haven't the faintest. It's your cup of tea."

I was understandably bitter. "So now it comes out, the reason for the flowers and the champagne and dinner at the supper club. Oh, and what a dirty, underhanded way to go about it! And telling me I'm out of International L.U.S.T. and turned over to Science. I wonder what genius thought that one up?"

"Not me. I only follow orders. They've been running into trouble in Science lately, though. They need a trouble-shooter, somebody like you who can go in and fight. They asked The General for somebody and he put the finger on Eve Drum."

"Bless his dirty little heart!"

David jerked his hips. I felt as if he'd hit me with a club. "Respect, my love. Respect your elders. Someday you'll be old yourself."

"I should live so long!"

His arms went around me, his hands zeroing in on my outstanding attractions, lifting them and giving them a little squeeze. At the same time his hips began a rhythmic slide and pound against my bottom that had the juices flowing in my girlish equipment in hardly any time at all.

"I hope you live a long time, angel," he breathed.

"Just so you can use me!"

"Well, I have a pretty good use for you, you must admit."

I giggled. He did, too. "Oh, all right. What's the sense of fighting City Hall? Okay. So I leave tomorrow

for Valley Rill. But what I don't understand is what I'm supposed to do."

"Bring him back alive."

"Is this a put-on? Why don't you hire some hunters with big game rifles to shoot him?"

"The authorities don't want him shot. They figure his living body is damn valuable to the bionics program. By studying him, they can avoid the apparent mistakes they made and maybe come up with a way to make everybody strong, healthy and big."

It figured. They never give me an easy way out. A golden bear seven feet tall, and my job was to capture it. Just like that. Well, why not? I'd been doing L.U.S.T.'s dirty work for quite some time. The League of Underground Spies and Terrorists is a by-blow of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency. We L.U.S.T. agents go where the others can't because we pull no punches, we fight fire with flame, and we damn well get the job done one way or another.

"I don't suppose I'll get to see you much more," I muttered.

This big blond Viking had bossed me around and had taken me to bed with him when the flesh moved him—like now, man—and all in all, had been something to soften the body blows I'd taken as a secret agent for International Division.

Now duty was calling with a different drum.

His head bent. His lips kissed my ear. I shivered. I turned in his arms, which were only holding me loosely now. My girl-girl mind was made up, all of a sudden. I was going to make David Anderjanian damn sorry he had let me go so easily to Science Division.

I moved in on him, my cannons firing hard nipples at his chest hairs. He got a glassy look in his Viking blue eyes that stared down at me as my Venus growth

took him where he was standing out in all his male glory, and started caressing him.

"Nice David," I cooed. "Darling David."

He was too far gone to be suspicious. I can turn on the fireworks when I want. And I wanted. My hips writhed and twisted and David shook and shivered. I kind of grew on him, if you know what I mean.

"Love glove?" I whispered, working my hips.

"Mmmmmmm."

Love glove was a new way of doing an old thing. It was a position we'd stumbled into quite by accident. David loved it; so did I.

I turned and ran toward the bed. I threw myself into the rumpled sheets and blankets and watched him through narrowed eyelids as he came running toward me. He climbed onto the bed, resting on hands and toes as if he were doing pushups.

My body slithered down, then I lifted my legs and wrapped them about his lean loins. My hand went in between us, found his 'finger' and inserted it into the 'glove'. My legs tightened, my middle jerked upward. The finger went deep into the glove.

I was resting on my head and shoulders, hanging onto him with my locked legs. The idea of the 'love glove' is that the finger will not rest comfortably at its first insertion but must be wriggled and twisted until perfect comfort is achieved. Since most of my body was off the bed, it was a simple matter for me to do all the wriggling and twisting necessary. All David had to do was maintain his arched position.

My hips went wild.

Maybe it was the idea that I might never get another chance like this, that drove me to new heights. I bounced and dipped and looped until David was in a frenzy of desire.

"I c-can't take m-much more," he breathed.

I rammed upward. My legs locked, squeezed tightly.

David let go with arms and legs, falling forward. His weight doubled me up beneath him so that I was squeezed down on my neck and shoulders. He started shaking. So did I. It went on and on in never-ending ecstasy.

Tomorrow was a long way off.

CHAPTER TWO

Sleeplessness made me stumble, getting out of the taxi in Valley Rill. My fingers fumbled in my handbag, found a five dollar bill and shoved it at the cabbie. His murmur of thanks was lost on me as I turned and stared around.

I saw a long, main street flanked by shops and stores of varying sizes and kinds. There was a church off to one side, its steeple stabbing skyward like a finger. Hills loomed in the background, plus a mountain that I gathered was Big Stone.

I turned around, found myself looking at a house that was covered all over its front with gingerbread scroll-work and wooden decorations. David Anderjani-an had told me, in our last tearful farewell, that this was the boarding house where bionics engineer Rhea Parker had her rooms. She had invited me to stay with her while I was in Valley Rill, and my case officer had joyfully accepted, probably figuring that staying with a female was better than with a male.

He was always taking the fun out of life.

I marched up to the front porch steps, opened the door and stooped to examine the mailbox in the hall. Rhea Parker, first floor left.

Seconds after my knuckles rapped on her door I heard footsteps stumbling around inside. When the door opened I found myself staring at a pretty face with long brown hair hanging down to shoulders cov-

ered by a flowered print robe. The robe was sheer, it revealed the fact that the woman was wearing a black lace and nylon bra nightgown under it. The robe hung open, so I could see the swells of big, soft breasts and dark brown areola.

"Hi," I exclaimed brightly. "I'm Eve Drum from the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists."

"Oh! Oh, yes. Come on in. Malcolm Newman—he's the director at the Institute—told me you'd be along. Don't mind me . . . I've been catching up on my shut-eye."

She stepped back into a shaft of sunlight that spotlighted her shapely legs, bare under the shorty nightie and the transparent print robe. I walked into a room that was light and airy, with white wood walls halfway up to where an old-fashioned chair rail held little ceramic miniatures. The wallpaper was yellow roses and blue forget-me-nots, entwined. The furniture was neat and very clean, even if a bit out of date. A combination television set, radio and phonograph player in a handsome wooden cabinet occupied a wall beside a door into what I assumed would be the bedroom and kitchen.

"It isn't much," smiled Rhea Parker, "but it suits me."

She waved a hand at the sofa while she sat in a heavily upholstered easy chair. Her eyes asked a question so I filled her in on what I knew about the case. I ended up with, "You knew Kenneth Frost personally, I understand."

"That's why I'm so shocked at what happened. He—he wasn't supposed to be alive, you know. By all our tests, he was dead. And nothing could have caused him to come back to life, like a sudden surge of electrical power or anything like that. The nearest I can figure it is that he was in a sort of incubation period when we

couldn't discover any traces of life, but he was alive, his monster body ripening to full power."

"Similar to that state of cataleptic trance in which people used to be buried alive because their bodies were dead as far as anyone could determine?"

"Something like that, yes."

I smiled at her. "My boss-man tells me I'm to work with you, if that's all right with you. You have the know-how, I don't. I'll do the physical work, if there is any. But the first thing I need to know is where to look."

She waved a hand at the big bay window through which I could glimpse part of the mountain. "Up there on Big Stone. That's where he's holed up. That's also where they found his wife."

"Did he really throw her against a tree?"

"She says he did."

There was something in her voice that made me smile. "You don't believe she's his wife, do you?"

"No, I don't. I knew Ken too well. He had no relatives, none at all. We used to talk a lot, he and I. He was a bachelor."

"I wonder why she'd lie?"

Her shoulders almost shrugged themselves out of her robe. "Who knows? I guess she had a reason, maybe she knew him as a bachelor and figured she might cash in on his death."

That made no sense, because sooner or later, especially since the will had to be probated and she would have to prove a marriage to Kenneth Frost, she would be found out to be a liar. No, whatever Pamela Frost had in mind, it was for a short-term benefit. But what kind of benefit did she hope to get from the Un-human?

My heart was thumping to my gathering excitement. Matters were getting even more interesting with this touch of misterioso added.

"Why don't we go see her?" I wondered.

Rhea Parker nodded grimly. "I'd love to!" She uncrossed her bare legs and stood up. "Come on into my bedroom with me while I get dressed. You can unpack and get yourself comfortable."

I looked a little startled, I imagine, because she added, "You're to stay with me, you know. I have twin beds; one of them's going to waste. Besides, I get a little shivery of nights with—with Ken Frost out there."

We made girl talk into the bedroom, past a kitchen and then a bathroom on the left of the narrow corridor. At one time the house was a private residence, but had been converted about twenty years ago. The bedroom was chintz and maple walnut, rather flowery and very feminine. I felt right at home in it.

I filled drawers with panties, bras and suchlike.

Rhea shrugged out of the flower print robe and was an eye-popper in the black-lace and nylon-bra gown she had worn under it. It was a nightie, of course, but it seemed a shame to waste something like that on two sheets and an otherwise empty bed. I could see just about all of her when she paused before a shaft of sunlight streaking in through a big window.

She was fleshy, but not fat. Her breasts stood up like big round melons and through the black lace of the bodice, I saw that her dark nipples were semi-erect. Hips that were curved as if by a master sculptor lead into very shapely legs.

"Well, hey," I said.

She turned her face to me, flushing faintly but not making any move to cover herself up. "I indulge myself. It's one of my few vices."

"So do I, Rhea. I'll put on a fashion show myself, come bedtime."

"I'll look forward to it," she laughed.

Then she bent and lifted off the nightgown, standing stark naked in front of me and letting me look at heavy

breasts and big, enlarged nipples. I have been around, I have played the lesbian bit with other women in all corners of the world. I knew a wanting woman when I laid eyeballs on her. Rhea Parker might prove very interesting.

She turned and walked away, her somewhat plump buttocks jiggling gently. I eyed them and told myself they would be very smooth to caress, come nightfall, if this was the way she wanted to play it. Me, I'm ready for a romp in a bedroom at any time. It's my thing.

She got dressed in the bathroom, I guess she figured there was no sense overdoing it. A hint was as good as a hit over the head to the woman who knows the way people are made.

She came back in a pebbled knit two-piecer, dark brown stockings and Selby shoes. Her brown hair was done up in a chignon. She looked gorgeous, with her body filling out the beige dress as though made for it. She giggled when she saw the admiration in my eyes.

"I couldn't resist wearing it. Usually I'm so dowdy when I go to work! But I have the feeling there won't be much work done today. Besides, when I see this woman who claims to be Ken's wife again, I want to be at my best."

Women understand these things. I grinned and nodded.

See drove a white Mustang very competently. We went out of town at sixty and hit the mountain road with a squeal of rubber tires. She said grimly, "If I were you, I'd investigate this woman who claims to be Pamela Frost."

"Already done, darling. The Investigation Division is handling that little tidbit. Naturally, I don't have their report. We've just begun working on this case. But I'll get it."

We whizzed along the mountain road, bordered on either side by towering pine trees and smaller firs.

Down across the valley to our left, autumn was a panorama of gold and red leaves splashed on a canvas that held farmhouses and little towns, a church or two with its white spire lifting skyward, a few roads like ribbons running here and there.

"I don't like fall," Rhea said, watching my stare.

"You don't? I love it. Everything is all over scarlet and gold and the air is brick, like wine."

"It's a dying time," she shivered. "Winter's coming and high snows and a lot of cold. Brrr! Not for me, thanks."

"I wouldn't trade the seasons, not for anything. The snow and the cold are all a part of living, the way I look at it. It makes me appreciate the green spring and hot, lazy summer all the more."

"Well, maybe. There's that to be said for it, of course. Like hitting your head with a hammer because it feels so great when you stop."

We went on chatting, I think to quell the terror that was in Rhea Parker at the moment, and because, like most females, I just like to yak. When she pulled into the parking lot at the Bionics Research Institute, we knew each other a lot better.

Rhea led the way into the huge building compound.

The Institute director glanced up from some papers he was reading as we came into his office. He was a tall man, his florid face furrowed with worry lines, his once brown hair streaked with white. He wore his clothes with the casual air of a man who did not realize that he was wearing them. Rhea had told me that his jackets were often stained with food from former meals, and there was always spilled tobacco in his pockets. He had been known to wear different colored socks when working on an especially intriguing problem in his laboratories.

He rose to his feet at sight of me and leaned across

the desktop to take my hand and welcome me to the Institute. His red face was split by a rueful smile.

"Sorry to meet you under these circumstances, Miss Drum, but the place is yours. We'll cooperate in every way with the League. Nothing else to be done, is there? But come along, you'll want to meet Ken's wife, I suspect."

There were bandages on her left hand and right wrist, and some more about her middle, where I was given to understand she had been thrown against a tree bole. Her blonde hair was a little awry, the Institute hospital not being a fashion resort. To my surprise, she seemed unconscious of this, because her big blue eyes were almost savagely intent on Rhea and myself as we came in the door behind Doctor Newmann.

Malcolm Newmann asked softly, "Can you talk to us now? This is Eve Drum, from the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists. She's here to make sure we take Kenneth alive."

The blue eyes raked me from my blunt-toed shoes to the blonde hair that peeped out from under a smart toque that matched my wool suit by Bigi. Her eyes were hard, cold; they belied the bland smoothness of her face.

I said cheerfully, "I understand your husband threw you against a tree." Honest, I couldn't help it, there was something about this woman that jarred on my feminine instincts.

To my delight, anger flared deep down in those eyes. This was a dangerous one, I told myself, my back stiffening under the slow, contemptuous stare. She said icily, "I can talk, but Miss Drum won't learn anything." Rhea stirred at that, and the woman added hastily, less belligerently, "Because there isn't anything to tell."

Rhea said too sweetly, "You said you could find and

bring him in, last night. You found him, all right. But you didn't bring him in."

The woman glanced at Malcolm Newmann who stood with a smooth face, without expression. I gathered that as director of the Institute, he did not intend to stick his neck out any further than he had to.

She muttered, "He isn't the Kenneth I knew. He's just an animal now. I—I've changed my mind. I think he should be killed."

"Fortunately, it isn't up to you," I commented.

Doctor Newmann cleared his throat. "Mrs. Frost may be right, you know. Ken has changed. He's become very dangerous."

"Mal!" Rhea snapped in surprise.

The tall man spread his hands. "I don't want to shoot him, you understand. But we can't have him going about attacking people."

"We bring him in alive," I explained tartly. "Those are my orders."

Pamela Frost simply stared at me.

Rhea said, "It's strange he should attack you. He didn't offer Adrian Trent and me any harm when we saw him. As a matter of fact, he saved our lives from a hungry cougar."

Pamela Frost looked sullen. I read the resentment, the stifled anger inside her. This woman was afraid, I thought. But of what? Surely she didn't expect the Un-human to come waltzing into the compound after her? I also wondered why, Rhea being so certain that Kenneth Frost had been unmarried, this woman had showed up at all.

She muttered, "You did all the damage, changing him the way you did. I should sue you."

"Ken signed over his body to us the way people will their body organs to science after their deaths. He didn't expect to live very long, you know. He was certified as being incurable. He was going to die in six

or eight more months. Until we began working on him. He was an orphan, without any relatives." Somewhat maliciously she finished, "And without a wife, as well."

"He lied. *I'm* married to him. *I'm* his wife."

"Can you prove that?" Rhea asked.

The woman glared at her. There was a fleshy attraction to this blonde, I had to admit. Malcolm Newmann was running eyeballs over the smooth shoulders that were completely bare except for the lacy blue straps of her nightgown that belonged, I learned later, to one of the nurses at the Institute. Doctor Newmann could also see the upper bulges of rather large breasts, naked under the frothy blue bodice.

Under the covers, Pamela Frost moved her legs petulantly. "I am married to him. I don't carry my marriage license around with me. Who does?"

Malcolm Newmann cut in smoothly. "I'm sure Mrs. Frost isn't going to sue us. She just wants her husband back—humanized again, if that's possible."

"Kenneth doesn't seem to want her," Rhea snapped.

There was malice in the big blue eyes as they looked at Rhea Parker. She said grimly, "As his wife, I have a right to know what you did to him, to make him into a monster. It may help me—us, that is—to get him back sooner. Maybe there is something I could learn from your telling me all about those alterations you made in his human form, that might help."

Rhea gasped. "It's highly specialized knowledge the layman wouldn't understand."

"Try me," smiled the woman.

Rhea Parker began talking.

The men and women of the Institute were biochemists seriously dedicated to the exploration and understanding of the comparatively new bionic sciences. The ear of the owl is supersensitive to sounds, and can pick up sound waves that are beyond the range of all other living things. The snake possesses the ability to

detect a temperature change of one-thousandth of a degree. The science of bionics wants to find out how and why each of these animals possesses a special gift of Nature, and to apply that gift to man himself.

"All biological organisms are nothing more or less than complicated electrical systems," Doctor Newmann picked up the explanation. "What Nature has done, man can do with technological culture."

Rhea said, "I could lecture for hours about what a modern-day bionicist seeks to do. It would take more hours to tell you about all the changes our laboratories made in what was once Kenneth Frost."

The smiling face framed by the yellow hair and the propped-up pillows urged Rhea Parker to go on talking. She explained how she and Adrian Trent, who worked with her on the project, had tested her husband by injecting his body with massive doses of hormones and other chemicals isolated from the gorilla, that should theoretically give him greater strength, and from the cheetah for its speed.

"It was all very experimental. According to the charts we kept, none of it seemed to have any effect until we put him in a room heated to tropical temperatures and highly uncomfortable humidity. We now realize that chamber was a kind of incubator, where everything seemed to spring to life at the same time. He was functioning on several levels with his various apparatus—and then he died."

Rhea pressed her palms together and stared out the window, ignoring the woman in the bed. She sighed and went on. "There was no heartbeat, no lung motion, no pulse. He didn't breathe. He was certified as—dead. As far as we could determine, he was dead.

"So we put him in a cold storage room, preparatory to performing an autopsy. The cold must have brought him back to life in a way we just don't possess enough knowledge to understand. You realize we . . ."

"Animal metamorphosis."

Malcolm Newmann stared and whirled at the woman. "What did you say?"

She came back from wherever she was, and looked a little startled. Then she smiled slowly and said, "I said he was an animal now. Not a man. I repeat what I said before, he should be shot as if he were a wild animal, which he is, in a manner of speaking. We should send hunters out to kill him. Obviously, he's gone mad."

I felt a little chill of horror run through me. But Rhea got out the words faster than I could. "What kind of wife are you? He's still a man. He's no beast! Why, he's like a mental patient who's run away from a sanitarium. Kill him, indeed!"

"A wife wants what is best for her husband! If a person is hopelessly ill . . ."

She paused, studying our stoney faces. She licked her lips, then murmured, "I'm sorry. It's just that I've been through so much—I can't think straight."

A shadow touched the door jamb. Then a man in a crumpled tweed suit was coming into the room, smiling a little shyly, nodding his head at Rhea and Doctor Newmann. I studied his greying hair and saw how it was receding from his high, bulging forehead. I knew him for Adrian Trent even before Rhea introduced us.

"And how's our patient today?" he said to Pamela Frost.

She seemed to burrow deeper into the bed and her face got back its sullen expression. "I'm as well as can be expected. I've been telling them my husband isn't a human being any more."

"We may be able to correct that, if we can ever get him back inside our laboratories."

"Yes, you were one of those who worked on him, weren't you?" The words were spoken in a syrupy voice, but the blue eyes were hard and deadly. They were like death looking at Adrian Trent. The man

seemed to know it because he shifted his shoulders uncomfortably. The woman said, "You and Rhea Parker, there."

She brightened suddenly, as if at a sudden thought. "I really would like to understand just how you changed him into a thing like that." She turned her blue eyes on Adrian Trent and Doctor Newmann cajolingly. "Please let me see your laboratories?"

"Are you well enough?" wondered Adrian Trent.

"Oh, yes. I have a few aches and pains, my back especially seems to be swollen to twice its size, but a visit to your laboratories will take my mind off them."

She threw back the covers almost flirtatiously; for the benefit of the men, I was positive. She was wearing only a thin nightgown that seemed to cling to her body, perhaps because of a slight dampness of her flesh. I watched her breasts bobble loosely as they swung out when she bent over to locate her slippers with her bare feet. Both Adrian Trent and Malcolm Newmann appeared unable to take their eyes off her.

Rhea hissed faintly to one side of me. I bit down on a growing smile because Adrian Trent was reaching for her frilly bathrobe and holding it up so she could slip her arms into it. She presented her front to Doctor Newmann and her front was something to see in that transparent nightgown.

Then she was wrapping her robe about her, tying its sash and flirting with the men, eyebrows arched and lips quivering in a friendly smile. She went out ahead of us into the corridor. The two men ran to come up on either side of her where they began competing for her attentions.

Pamela Trent went from laboratory to laboratory like a visiting queen. She stood quite still, concentrating, as Adrian Trent explained this and that to her. She studied the chemical formulaes of the vaccines, hormones, amino acids and enzymes, nucleic acids and

animal tissues Rhea Parker and Adrian Trent had worked with, to make Kenneth Frost what he had become. She listened, nodding gravely, while Doctor Newmann spoke of Icarus and his father, Daedalus, who had been the first bionics engineer in a sense, because he had sought to put a bird's wings on a human body.

"True, most bionics engineering is concerned with building a machine that will duplicate the life forms of Nature. I could mention Visilog, an experimental eye developed by General Electric. Airborne Instruments has another, and Lincoln Laboratory a third, each with its own specialized ability."

Bionics helped the blind by borrowing from the bat and its inbuilt radar device that enables the bat to fly between fine wires without seeing them, using only its radar detection sense. Flashlights and canes that transmit sound signals to a blind person as radar is transmitted to the bat, permit them to be as independent of their blindness as is the bat.

"What other scientists have done with machines, we tried to do with a living person," Rhea said. "In time, man will go to the other planets. Mankind may have to be rebuilt along certain radical lines to enable men to survive on planets that might kill him now."

"The term for men so changed, who will have machines planted inside their bodies to enable them to survive in what would otherwise be a hostile atmosphere, is *cyborgs*. We had hoped to go the *cyborg* one better with Kenneth Frost. He was to have been a man with natural functions of carefully selected animals, instead of machines, planted inside his body. This is why it's so important we take him alive. He may be a boon to human life, not only on other planets, but here on Earth as well."

Pamela Frost shrugged, gathered her wrapper closer

about her body. "I think I have seen enough," she declared coldly.

She walked down the corridor ahead of Rhea Parker with a faint, challenging swing to her haunches. It annoyed the woman scientist that this blonde woman should so blatantly resort to her sexuality. I could see. It was almost as if she were turning it on and off where the male scientists were involved, to get her own way.

What was that way? What good would it do her, a layman where it came to science, to know these things about the manner in which her husband had been changed? She could not help him, I was convinced of that.

Well, maybe all the scientists here at the compound could not help him, either. Ken Frost might be mad. At all events, he was ranging through the forests like a deranged animal, like some alien being from a different planet.

I wondered if the local police would think as Pamela Frost thought. They well might form a cordon of heavily armed men to seek out and destroy that which had been—and still was—a human being. I told myself a phone call to The General was in order, so he could get in touch with the authorities and sidetrack any such highhanded methods.

In the little reception room to which Malcolm Newmann lead us, I caught Adrian Trent by the elbow and manoeuvred him off to one side. I wanted his side of the story, I had to know what he thought about the Un-human before I could make up my own mind.

"What do you really think, Adrian? I'd like your considered opinion, I'd value it very highly."

He flushed with pleasure. He was a shy, gentle man, handsome in a shaggy sort of way. He had a thing about the English, this was why he was always wearing heavy tweed suits, I imagine, with rumpled pockets into

which he would thrust pipes and tobacco pouches without thought of how unsightly they might be.

"Ken Frost was a friend, Miss Drum. I knew him as a co-worker before he signed over his body to us. It's as if a bad accident had happened to someone you've known and liked for a long time. The mere thought of having professional hunters go up on Big Stone mountain to shoot him makes me want to—well, cry I guess."

"And this woman who calls herself Pamela Frost?"

His forehead furrowed as he concentrated. "Ken always claimed he was unmarried, long before we started experimenting on him. I am certain of the fact that he always filed his income taxes as a single person, never as a married man or the head of a family. He was dedicated to science, to learning as much as he could and passing it on to the people who came after him. He said it would be like a legacy to the sons and daughters he'd never had."

"I think I like him already," I murmured.

His face lighted. "He was a good man, a very good man."

"What do you think Pamela Frost is after?"

"His accumulated salary, plus interest and the other fringe benefits he will leave when he dies. It amounts to quite a bit, as I understand it. More than a hundred thousand dollars. Worth a try, I'd say."

Neither of us noticed Pamela Frost in the doorway until I saw her reflection in the mirror, with an utterly diabolic expression contorting her features. She smoothed out her face as I turned.

"I just came in to ask if I could dress and leave," she exclaimed, too cheerily. "I can lie in bed in my hotel room, and feel a little freer."

Doctor Newmann took her off with him to the medical section of the compound, agreeing that there was no reason why she shouldn't go if she wanted to. Rhea

Parker looked at her wristwatch, said she had a lot of work to do, then glanced at Adrian and me.

"Adrian will drive you to my place, Eve. He's off duty now and—he's been working all night trying to find some sort of antidote to what we did to Kenneth. We're picking up the pieces, you see. And I have to carry on until we're all back on some sort of regular schedule."

Adrian Trent said he would love to drive me home.

We were moving along the mountain road when he murmured, "The more I think of it, the more I'm convinced Pamela Frost—or whatever her real name is, is an opportunist. What we used to call a gold-digger."

"How did she know about him?"

"The same way Rhea did. She heard a radio broadcast. No—wait! The broadcaster never mentioned him by name, just said there was an animal that had escaped from the Institute. He didn't even hint it was a human being we'd been experimenting on.

"I checked with Mal about that. He released the news item. He deliberately said it was an animal, to avoid complications and possible repercussions. He figured we'd get Ken back before long and things would be hushed up."

I scowled at the road ahead. "She must have found out somehow. Is there an informer at the Institute, somebody who saw a good chance to make some bread and grabbed it?"

"I can't think of anyone off-hand, but then, I don't know everybody at the Institute."

"She worries me. She's an odd note and I don't like odd notes in my cases. They always make trouble."

He rubbed a hand across his broad forehead, smiling wryly. "I'm a bit beat, so I can't think as straight as I normally might. I need some shut-eye."

"You and me both. Still, my stomach's telling me that I'm hungry, so I'm going to don the feed-bag

before I hit the sack. If I was really home, I'd invite you up to my apartment to feast on scrambled eggs and ham or some such."

He turned toward me for a brief moment, eyes dancing. "I have eggs. And ham. Let me cook you up a batch. I think I'm hungry myself, now it's been mentioned."

He told me a little about himself on the way to his apartment. Enough to know that he was a man of deep personal convictions and conflicting passions. Reading between his words, I discovered a side of Adrian Trent I'd bet dollars to doughnuts that Rhea Parker never suspected, despite the fact that she had been going on dates with him for a couple of years.

They had begun on the plantonic level and that's where their relationship had stayed. Good buddies. Intellectual interests and all that. Doctor Trent had never been married; he'd been too busy studying and teaching and then taking part in the Institute program to consider getting himself a wife.

Still, the needs of the flesh ate away inside him.

He was almost a forty-year-old virgin.

Nothing of this was said, you understand, though he did admit to having dinner dates with Rhea Parker. There was an undertone of dissatisfaction in his voice when he spoke about her. Remembering the way she'd posed bare-ass naked for me earlier today, I began to suspect why. Rhea was not interested in males. But Adrian, despite his shyness and his diffident ways, was very much interested in females.

Me, I'm interested in everybody.

He lived in an old stone mill, or what had been a mill back in Revolutionary War times. He told me quite proudly, as he lead me up a path of crushed gravel, that it had taken all his savings to buy this place and have it done the way he wanted. The huge wheel inside its wooden casing jutted from the north end of

the mill, where a small brook still ran down a rock spillway, below an iron balcony thrusting from the stone wall of the second storey. The old windows had been replaced, there were new doors and new floors to the balcony and inside the house as well.

Adrian explained how he had stripped the building to its original post-and-beam skeleton, then added stonework and plank floors with ironwork balconies and suchlike. It had cost him a lot of money, he admitted, but this was his retirement home; by the time he was ready to retire, he would have built his savings back to what they had been, and would be able to live quite comfortably in this refurbished mill.

The interior was bright with colored prints and painted wooden walls, the upstairs bedrooms were done in toile wallpaper and that same toile was used for window drapes and bedspreads. The arrangement of pictures and etchings, the hanging brass lanterns that served as electric light fixtures, showed the touch of an interior decorator.

The kitchen was something out of *Better Homes and Gardens*, with two walls of grey fieldstone, long wooden-topped counters, twin stoves, a dishwasher and indirect lighting. No bachelor had a right to live in a showplace like this, and I told him how I felt.

"I thought I might get married," he said wistfully.

I could have told him he was wasting his time with Rhea Parker, but I busied myself with a big skillet and strips of ham gently frying. Then I mangled half a dozen eggs, beating them to a frothy gold with a whip.

We ate at a breakfast nook beside a tall floor-to-ceiling glass panel that looked out on a combination rock garden and series of pools that Adrian had built himself, just for exercise.

I liked Adrian Trent. I was of half a mind to give him a little loving, but I figured that could keep. The man was bleary-eyed with the need for sleep.

I marched him upstairs, and tucked back his bed covers. "You get undressed and climb in here," I ordered. "I'll straighten up downstairs and see what we need for supper."

"You will stay, then?" he asked. There was a pleading in his voice that I just couldn't refuse. The man was starved for companionship, for affection. Do-gooder little me! I borrowed his car keys and told him I'd be back later, when he was awake.

I had plans for Adrian Trent.

CHAPTER THREE

I was asleep on the living room couch when Adrian Trent came downstairs, still in his pyjamas and a bathrobe by Casanova. I must have made a rather alluring picture, for I had made sure his eyes would pop at sight of me. I had on a 'no dress' creation of Neil Bieff, a transparency of cotton-dacron voile that showed off my girl-girl body in the absolute altogether, really, except for the purple pantihose I wore under it.

The striped white and purple dress was micro-length, naturally. I was a purple passion pussycat, all right.

I woke up to the tread of his feet coming down the staircase. They halted abruptly at sight of me. Adrian Trent was so used to living alone that he had forgotten all about little old me. I reminded him by lying there, all curves and bulging breasts with my shapely legs sprawled a little part.

"My God," I heard him say, very softly.

I let him walk across the floor to stand looking down at me for a few seconds before my eyelashes fluttered and rose. I smiled at him, admiring the stupified admiration in his scholarly face. There is something very satisfying to a woman knowing that she is adored and worshipped by a male. And Adrian Trent was very much my worshipper at that moment.

I lifted my arms and wriggled my fingers at him. He smiled tightly, fighting the emotions that made him want to fall on top of me like a sex-crazed satyr, and

caught my hand, lifting me upward. I swung my feet over the edge of the couch and stood up, right against him.

Adrian was standing up himself, quite as excitedly.

"Ooooooh," I caroled happily.

He actually blushed. Honestly, I don't think he'd been this close to a girl for maybe twenty years. He cleared his throat and tried to look professorial, but I never gave him the chance. I threw my arms around him and gave him what the cognoscenti term a splashy kiss.

His arms tightened about me. He nudged me with his rigid *peos*. I whispered, "We'll have to do something about that later, Adrian. Right now, I think cocktails are in order."

I stirred a mixture of martinis. I took out the ice so they wouldn't dilute too much, just before I poured them. Adrian had three, and with each one he cast off more and more of his inhibitions.

He turned on his Zenith portable stereo. When the music came in soft and dreamy, he came across the room, pulled me from the easychair where I was relaxing into his arms. To my surprise, he was a pretty good dancer, 'old-fashioned but with good rhythm.

I didn't dare give him a fourth drink; he was high on three. So I brought him out into the kitchen, seated him at the table, and began working on the indoor grille and glowing red coals covered by a thick filet mignon. I made a chicory and escarole salad with my own special Italian wine vinegar, olive oil and spices dressing.

He damn near proposed to me when he was done.

I have made a study of men, since knowing what men like is very vital to a girl in the L.U.S.T. secret service. I am a sexpert, natch; but I am also a damned good cook. I let Adrian beam at me for a few minutes before I sprang the punch line.

I said casually, "Now to bed."

He came close to choking on his swallow of coffee. His face got all red and his eyes bulged, but there was a big grin on his not unshapely mouth.

"I'm not used to such honesty," he managed to say when I asked him what the trouble was.

"It's just the generation gap," I giggled. "We're a lot more honest than your crowd is. When we want something, we admit it. You want me, I know—but you'd die before you'd say so."

He nodded like an automaton.

I reached for his hand and drew him to his feet. Then I walked ahead of him, tugging him by the hand out through the living room. I figured he could walk upstairs without my hand tugging him along, so I went before him, lifting off my transparent gown as I did. All I had on were my purple pantihose.

His hands caught me before I reached the top step. An instant later his lips were browsing all over my bare back, up and down my spine and down around and over my nyloned buttocks. I wriggled and twisted lazily, because his mouth was getting to me right where I did my living.

"I love that," I whispered.

He made guttural noises that I finally sorted out to my satisfaction. "I've dreamed of a woman like you all my life. I've never met one. Eve—I want you so badly. So badly!"

"So goodly, honey," I breathed. "Think positively!"

His laughter rang out, happy and assured. "I feel I can say anything I want to you. You're some kind of love goddess! You aren't just an ordinary human being. Which one are you? Isis? Ishtar? Venus?"

Well, hell! He was a scholar. He was entitled to talk like that if he wanted. Besides, he went on kissing my buttock cheeks while he did his talking, and I was enjoying it to no end . . . no pun intended.

"I'm all of them, honey. I know ways to make love

that will curl your hair, to say nothing of your other parts. Come on upstairs with me. I want to see what a prize I've won."

"I'm not sure I . . ."

I whirled and covered his mouth with a palm, which he kissed immediately and with all the signs of sexual starvation. "Ssssh! Don't talk like that. Think positively, remember? You can do anything you want to, and I'm the girl who'll prove it to you."

Adrian Trent was like a fresh breath of sea air. He was unspoiled, he had no preconceived notions of how a man should make love to a girl. He was like clay in the hands of me, sculptress.

I undressed him, dropping the Casanova robe and his Battaglia pyjamas to the floor. He stood naked, like some sort of pagan god, slightly aged. His maleness was like one of those carved wood priapi which the old Roman wedding god, Mutunus Tutunus, used to possess. I guess I gaped at him in surprise, because he chuckled.

"It's been a long, long time. I have a lot of loving stored up inside me."

I nodded. "That's the spirit—and the flesh as well, I might add. Positive thinking is in."

I wore only my purple pantihose as I writhed against him, clinging to his torso and letting him know how hard my breasts had become by rubbing them against his almost hairless chest. I opened my thighs to accommodate his urgency, and then I tightened my upper thighs on its massiveness.

Adrian Trent began to groan.

I didn't keep him in too much suspense, but I didn't hurry, either. I wanted him to remember this night; I wriggled and writhed my hips where he was imprisoned with a slow sensuality that had him panting with his tongue out. His hands were running over my nyloned

buttocks in gentle heat and there was a dreamy glaze over his eyes.

"We'll borrow a love leaf from the Chinese," I whispered to his open mouth.

"In the classic, *I Ching*, it says that the sex union of a man and a woman gives life to everything," he replied.

He wasn't all egghead, this boy. At least he read the right books. I let my fingernails slide down his bare chest and taut belly to his impudicity. He gave a low cry when my fingers went around him.

"I bought a pillow book at a rare art auction," I breathed. "It was called *The Pillow Book of Heavenly Passions*. You do know what a pillow book is, don't you?"

"A book of erotic pictures, usually given to a bride and groom on their wedding day. In China, that is."

"Some of them are extremely valuable, they've been done by great artists. Chao Meng Fu himself is supposed to have done mine."

"It—must have—cost a—fortune."

Actually, it had been a gift for a job well done by Eve Drum of L.U.S.T., but I didn't tell Adrian that; let the dear man think me rich, if he wanted.

"The Chinese have wonderful names for their love positions," I said softly. "There is the 'wailing monkey embracing a tree' and the 'bamboos near the water', for instance."

"I'd love to—try them all!"

"Oh, but we shall. But in a very special way. You know about the *ying* and *yan* principle of Chinese eroticism? How they believe that *yang* was a vital force in men, and *yin* in women. For a man to shed his seed too often was to lose some of that vital force.

"And in the old days, a man had many wives, many concubines. He must spend himself very sparingly, you understand. So the master of the house would make

love with a number of his concubines—without letting go—and then he would finish himself off in one of his wives, in the hope that she would conceive a fine, strong son filled with the same *yang* principle.”

I led him toward an upright chair as I talked. I pushed him back so he was sitting there, like the statues of the god Mutunus Tutunus I've already mentioned, on whose rigid wooden manhood Roman brides were wont to sacrifice their maidenhoods on their bridal nights.

I breathed, “Consider me as one of your concubines, master. You must make love to many of us before you get to ball your wife. Regard me as the ‘plain girl’ of Chang Heng in his second century poem.”

I slipped out of my pantihose and slid down on his jade stick, easing myself over it, clasping it as the plum blossom clasps the morning dew. Up and down I posted, caroling, “See how the fish plays among the water plants, dear lover.”

His hands were on my breasts, holding them with long fingers and supporting palms. From time to time he tightened the first and second fingers of each hand, between which my brown nipples protruded stiffly, sending bolts of enjoyment down my spine. We were both gasping and grunting by this time, but I did not want him to lose his *yang* essence; not so soon, certainly; I wanted this to be a long night.

I tightened up on him, holding him without motion. He sensed my excitement, adding to it by bending his head and drawing in on the nipple nearest his mouth. From this he went to the other breast, and back again, playing the game of ‘bee drawing out the flower food’ that is a garden variety of Chinese erotic terminology.

“Now for the next pillow book scene, the ‘general smashing the enemy’. In this,” I went on, “the manner of the strokes is most important. You must flail to left

and right as the Yellow Book suggests. You understand?"

He watched as I lay down on the bed and rested my heels on the mattress edge. My split peach was offered to his stare, and must have been very pleasing to his sight because he let out a low growl and flung himself down on his knees before it. His hands went to my thighs, his palms sliding up and down as his head dipped and his mouth offered me what the Chinese term 'the sipping at the medicine of the three mountain peaks'.

In seconds I was yowling as the Lady of the Vase had yowled when Hsi-men was giving her lotus blossom the tongue and lip treatment as told in that Chinese love classic, *Chin Ping Mei*. He was some general, Adrian was. I lost my head for a little while, but I recovered before he spilled his *yang* juice.

"Tired of the plain girl?" I wondered, rolling over on the bed and getting to my kness. I walked across the bed on my knees and then moved across the room toward a bureau. I gripped the edge of the bureau with my hands and projected my backside at the gaping scientist.

"Ever try 'the hound and the bitch in the love gardens of Shou Lou'?" I asked.

He could hardly mistake the posture that is known as the 'manner of the ram' in Hindu circles, and Venus reversa among the ancient Romans. His hands slid up to my dangling breasts as he shared his *yang* with my *yin*. We made 'the music of the jade sceptre' for long minutes.

Adrian Trent was just about ready to burst his cloud, as the Chinese put it. His hands were like clamps on my breasts and he was swelling in that preliminary manifestation of the *yin chu yang*.

I pulled away just in time.

"Eve, my God!" he almost screamed.

"I know, I know. But we aren't done yet. I've been the 'plain girl' and the 'dark girl'—which are symbolic representations of the concubines of an old-time mandarin. Now I'll become the lady of the house, the wife, with whom it is legal to share the *tiu* explosion."

I ran ahead of him to the bed. I lay down on my back and raised my thighs, parting them. "This is to be the 'making dragon and tiger sport together'. The bursting of both our clouds, honey. So open my 'gate of life' and get busy with the 'jade stalk'."

We played the game of alternating deep and shallow strokes, the 3-5-7-9 of Taoist discipline, for a long time. I think Adrian Trent was a little out of his skull at his prolonged endurance feat. He was strong as the bull man of the Hindus, the *vrishabha*. He speared away like fabled Hercules banging the fifty women of his thirteenth feat of strength.

But all good things must come to an end. We ended in a convulsed ball of vibrating, panting flesh at the footboard, doubled up and gripping each other as our clouds burst and went on bursting for an eternity of pleasure.

We slept like that, with all the lights on.

He woke me in the middle of the night, kissing my breasts like a confirmed mammaeist. I responded as he hoped, sliding a pillow under me and myself under him.

"Just plain American this time," he panted.

We were patriotic like that for about half an hour, after which we fell asleep again. Sometime during the night he must have waked and turned off the electric lights, because when I opened my eyes the bedroom was lighted only by shafts of early morning sunlight.

My hand went questing for my bed partner. "Adrian?"

I sat up, puzzled. The man must have been very tired. He ought to be snoozing away here with me

under the covers. Instead he was prowling around the house. I sniffed, figuring he might have gone to make coffee, but there was no coffee smell.

Something was crawling around inside me.

Fear. Worry. Anxiety.

Something was wrong. My female instincts knew it.

I leaped from the bed and snatched at my Neil Bieff dress. I slithered it over my curves and ran out into the hall and down the carpeted stairs. I yelled his name but I didn't get any answer. I went into the kitchen. No Adrian. I went out on the wooden deck overlooking the rock garden and the tiers of little pools. Still no Adrian Trent.

I ran back into the living room. I felt cold. I noticed then that the front door was ajar. My hand on the big wooden door shoved it open.

My eyes stared in utter horror.

What was left of Adrian Trent lay in a pool of his own blood and shattered brains, sprawled out on the graveled walk. Somebody had blown the top of his head off at a distance of about a yard. I felt sick but I have seen death before, many times. I swallowed a couple of times and darted back into the living room.

I phoned Rhea Parker.

She was still full of sleepytime somnambulance. "Lo?" she bleated.

"You stay where you are, Rhea! This is Eve Drum talking. Somebody's just killed Adrian Trent. I think that somebody is on her way to kill you, too. So you stay put. Don't you dare answer that doorbell if it rings, no matter what the person says—until I get there!"

I hung up and dialed the police, clueing them in on my identity and that I was one of L.U.S.T.'s working people. I waited until a patrol car came up the drive with siren screaming and red light flashing.

Five minutes after I promised the officer to drop in

at headquarters and make a statement, I was on my way. I could have told the cops I thought Pamela Frost was the murderess, and that Rhea Parker was to be her next victim, but I didn't. Oh, I would in time, but the police would have thrown a cordon of bluecoats around her apartment house, and I didn't want that.

I wanted to act on my own.

Rhea answered my voice, fully dressed. She was shivering a little, eyes big and her full red mouth quivering. "Is A-Adrian really d-dead?" she whispered.

"He is, and if I know a killer when I see one, Pamela Frost has you on her list for her next victim."

"Oh! Oh my God! But—why me?"

"Adrian worked on Kenneth Frost. So did you. In her crazy, mixed-up mind she blames you both." I hesitated, frowning. "Still, she didn't seem the sort of person to go off the deep end like that. Too cold, too calculating. But what's her motive, if that's not it?"

Rhea shook her head numbly. She had caught my worried excitement. She tried to speak calmly but her fists were clenched so tightly she was driving her long fingernails deep into her palms.

"It must be her, it must. Adrian didn't have any enemies. That Frost woman knows Ken and I are the only ones who worked the whole bit on Ken. We're the only ones who have the specialized skill and know-how to bring him back to what he was. . . ."

She broke off, gasping.

"I think you hit the bullseye, Rhea. It's exactly why she's killed Adrian and will try to kill you—but why does she want to kill you both? What I mean is, with Adrian and you dead, there'd be no hope for Kenneth Frost.

"He'll always stay an Un-human. Why should she want that? Of course, it could be for the money he's accumulated but that doesn't seem a sufficient reason."

Hopefully, Rhea said, "Maybe we have it all wrong. Maybe she isn't the one who did it."

"Did Adrian have any other enemies? Did he gamble? Did he hang around with bad companions?"

The woman smiled faintly. "No. He worked long hours in the compound, he didn't have any energy left to gamble. And he had no enemies. He was utterly inoffensive."

I knew the answer to this one already, but I asked, eyebrows arching, "How about girl friends? An ex-wife?"

"No. None of those."

"Then we're on pretty safe ground. Look, I think you'd be safer at the Institute than here. We'll take a run out there right now. You can bed down in the hospital section. Go pack a bag."

"What about you?"

I smiled faintly. "I'll stay here in the hope she comes gunning for you. I have a lot of experience with firearms and the people who trigger them at other people. Please, it's for the best."

She turned away but could not resist flinging over her shoulder, "Was Adrian good last night?"

I had on my poker face. "I stayed to protect him. He was the perfect gentleman." *And lover*, I added mentally. I was damn glad Adrian Trent and I had done a bit of buttonholing last night. At least he had died happy, in a sense.

She bought it, or at least she made no further allusion to my having been gone all night. I don't think she really cared. My hunch was Rhea Parker cared more for a female than for a male. This was a belief I meant to prove one of these nights.

She packed her bag in ten minutes.

Rhea led the way to her white Mustang with me at her elbow, looking around for signs of Pamela Frost. My right hand was inside my Gabrielle shoulder bag,

clasped about the ivory butt-plates of my Belgian Bulldog revolver. At first sight of her I would whip out my gun and hold her until Rhea could bring the cops.

Pamela Frost didn't show.

Rhea slid into the driver seat of the Mustang. I climbed in beside her. I saw that the gas tank was full as she switched on the ignition and hit the starter. The motor purred to life with a sweet sound. She backed from the parking slot in the apartment cellar garage and drove out into the traffic. Her hands were so tightly clenched on the steering wheel, her knuckles showed white and bloodless.

"Relax," I breathed. "Otherwise you'll have an accident and we don't want any more complications."

I turned and looked behind us as she sped along Mortimer Street. A red Camaro eased out from the curb and came after us. A woman was driving, but I couldn't tell from this distance if it was the Frost dame or not.

I said nothing to Rhea; she was worried enough. But my hand tightened a little more firmly on the Bulldog. I was happy to see that Rhea was driving faster now that we were out of Valley Rill and moving for the mountain road. If the girl in the red Camaro was Pamela Frost, we'd know soon enough.

I did some thinking. The mountain road was lonely all the way to the Bionics Research Institute. If that woman was Pamela Frost, she would have a long stretch of roadway along which to overtake us, force us into the ditch and shoot us.

The suicide seat window of the red Camaro was down, I noticed when the morning sunlight failed to reflect off it. She would have a clear opening through which to fire. And she was fumbling at something on the seat beside her. Getting a gun? Were her fingers tightening around a handgun the way mine were

clutching the Belgian revolver? I was damn sure they were!

The red car was coming closer, closer. Its right front wheel was level with the Mustang's left rear wheel. I could see the woman clearly now.

The Camaro moved forward, gaining steadily.

CHAPTER FOUR

He had heard the car motors from far away.

His ears, covered with the shaggy golden hairs of his huge body, tilted forward slightly to pick up the sounds. This was one more thing about the new, almost untested body he was learning; his ears could catch and distinguish between sounds which to his human ears would have been almost inaudible.

One car motor sounded familiar.

The Un-human growled low in his throat. One car belonged to the woman from whom he had taken the metal rod. She had tried to kill him with it; he thought he had killed her, but apparently she had gotten safely away.

Maybe she was coming to make a second attempt to kill him. He must not let her do that. It was very important that he stay alive. He began to run with that incredible speed of which his bionically rebuilt body was capable. He flashed between the white bolés of dogwood trees and the darker trunks of the oaks, his feet barely touching the ground, but carrying him toward the road at close to eighty miles an hour.

He came down off the forest floor just as the Camaro began its forward surge to gain on the white Mustang. In the Mustang he saw Rhea Parker, the woman who had come into the edge of the forest and had tried to talk to him a few hours before the woman in the

Camaro had come to kill him, and a strange blonde girl.

He saw the gun in the hand of Pamela Frost.

The Un-human leaped forward at full speed.

He ran like the breeze sweeping these woodlands through the oaks and the birches, barely skimming the ground, unseen by anyone, stirring the little bushes past which he raced. Underfoot, there was the pine-needled floor, the gravelly edge of the road, and then the smooth blacktop. He gained on the two cars at every step.

He came up on the outside of the Camaro, he reached in the open window and caught hold of Pamela Frost by the neck. He yanked her, screaming, forward against the windshield just as her gun went off, and then he let her go.

Unchecked, the Camaro veered off the road.

The Un-human caught one swift thought before she died, in a screeching welter of tortured metal and shredding glass.

Beware the beast with the golden fur! He. . . .

He slowed his headlong run, whirling to see the Mustang braking to the side of the road. The door opened.

CHAPTER FIVE

Rhea Parker was sobbing fitfully, crouched over the steering wheel. It had been a near thing. When the red Camaro started bucking and swerved off in front of the white Mustang, she had braked the car hard, swinging it off into a ditch to avoid a collision. Her car was tilted at a slight angle, but I managed to open the door, even at that angle, and step outside.

I ran around the side of the car and froze.

Seven feet of golden-furred monster was glaring at me with big, grey eyes. It was vaguely human: it had a chest, two arms, two long, powerful, furry legs, and a head. It looked like a cross between a man and a grizzly bear. There was keen intelligence behind those grey eyes that stared at me so steadily.

I held out my hand, palm up.

"Wait, please! I must talk to you. It's very important."

He ignored me, turning to run lightly off toward the woods. I ran after him, slipping and sliding in my Palizzio pumps. I was still wearing the Niel Bieff original, which made me damn chilly, up this high on the forested mountainside. Luckily, I was wearing my purple pantihose as well. They helped a little.

"Don't go! Kenneth Frost—listen to me! Listen! I must speak with you. Do you hear me? Can you understand what I'm saying?"

A notion had come into my mind. If I could meet

Ken Frost and talk to him, maybe I could convince him that the safest thing for him to do was come back with Rhea and me to the Institute. There he would be cared for by the finest scientists and doctors in the country.

I slipped and slid between dense thickets of hazel and clumps of berry-bushes. I bumped into two or three tree boles and bounced off. The pine needles were slippery under foot and I came close to falling full-length on the forest floor. Then I did stumble and . . .

A huge hand lifted me easily under my elbows. I stared up into a face that was covered with fine golden hairs, not so long as a bear's fur, but long enough to protect from the cold. The face was human, oddly enough, despite those fine hairs. In a weird way it was handsome.

The thing made a croaking noise.

Was it trying to talk to me?

I was still a bit numb from seeing this Un-human. He towered a good seven feet tall, with shoulders more than a yard wide, sloping and ridged with muscle. One thing I'll say for the Institute scientists; they sure did a great job on this man who had been only five foot three and a hundred and twenty pounds when they began working on him. The great muscles under his tawney hide rippled and bunched to his slightest movement.

"I'm a friend," I panted. "A friend! You know Rhea Parker? I saved her life—at least, you did, but I was taking her to the Institute where she would be safe. And—Adrian Trent is dead. That woman you killed—killed him."

The beast said nothing, but his grey eyes regarded me in thoughtful fashion. I put my hand out gingerly, touched his hairy chest. His heart was thudding away solidly, like a drumbeat. My mind was a bit confused, I just couldn't think straight.

"Ken, pay attention to me. I'm going to speak slowly so you get the drift of what I'm saying. Now . . .

let—me—come—with—you. You—must—go—back—to—the—Institute.”

“Glurrrrk! Glurrrrk!”

The sound of his voice paralyzed me. Apparently Trent and Rhea Parker had not gotten around to his vocal chords, or else those had changed as other parts of his body had changed when they filled him with nucleic acids and such. He was a human being, transformed into a dumb beast. I think that realization hit me for the first time at that moment. Until then, Kenneth Frost was no more than a name to me. I sagged a bit at the knees.

He put his arm about me very gently, holding me as if I were a baby. His body was quite warm. To my surprise, I didn't notice the hairs on his chest and thighs. They were long and smooth, not bristly. It was like cuddling up with a gigantic teddy bear.

I looked up at him and smiled. “So I'll be a drag on you, but take me along anyhow. In there, Ken—in there!” I pointed at the woods. I figured that if I could be with him, I'd figure out some way of communicating with him.

With my right hand I eased his right arm about my middle. I smiled at him warmly and pointed once more into the woods. “Take me in there with you, Ken.”

Hesitantly, his face furrowed in thought, he scooped me off my feet and walked a few yards with me into the woods. I laughed happily, nodding my head. When he saw this he stooped, swung me up into his arms and moved forward at a trot.

I put my left arm about his neck. He didn't seem to mind my weight. He walked easily and relaxed. I began talking to him.

“Ken, you're a human being. Don't you remember? You're a scientist. You gave your body to the Bionic Research Institute to work on and—oh, God! What they did to it!”

I fought against the sympathy and pity my watering eyes revealed. "I've g-got to make you talk to me, to understand what I'm saying. Even if I have to teach you to talk all over again. Sometimes people have to do that, when their throats are operated on for cancer. You're like that, Ken—or like a newborn baby."

He went deeper into the woods, higher on the mountain, where the sunlight became a pale green mist under the leafy branches forming a gigantic parasol above our heads. It was very quiet in there among the trees where the wild flowers made a red and white carpet stretching on for miles.

I never knew how long it took before we reached the little cabin that he had made his home. It loomed up in a partially overgrown clearing between the tall boles of big elms and chestnuts. At one time it had sheltered hunters; maybe it still did during the hunting season. There were curtains on the windows and the window frames were painted beige. Against the dark wood of the logs they made a pretty picture.

"Do you live here?" I asked.

He frowned as if trying to understand my words. His grip on me relaxed so that I now stood on my own feet. There was intelligence in his grey eyes, but no understanding of what I was saying. I sighed and touched his chest with my forefinger, thinking of the 'me, Jane—you, Tarzan' routine.

"Ken," I breathed.

I repeated the word, waiting patiently for understanding to come into his eyes. With his deep voice he tried to repeat what I said.

I touched myself on the chest. "Eve. Eve. Eve."

He said my name far easier than he had been able to manage his own. But I realized that with practice, he could speak almost as well as any human. It was odd how the memory banks in his brain—the temporal lobes on each side of the brain near the ears—had been

affected by the special diet and drugs and injections he had received. I hoped Rhea Parker might be able to help here, maybe with some special chemicals that might restore that ruined memory.

"I've got to teach you to talk," I muttered.

To my surprise, he pointed at the ceiling. For the first time he uttered a word I could make out very clearly. "Drann!" he exclaimed, still pointing upward. "Drann!"

I shook my head, not understanding. There is no such word as *drann*. What was he trying to tell me? He looked disappointed.

To help him, I asked, "Clouds? Sky?"

He shrugged and turned away, moving toward the cabin. Vaguely feeling as if I were taking part in a *Twilight Zone* tale, I went after him. The wind off the mountaintop was colder now, with a hint of coming winter in its touch. I shivered.

The Un-human opened the door, stood back. I glanced at him and saw his reassuring nod. I stepped into the single large room that held a kitchen of sorts in a distant corner.

A bunk bed stood beside the north wall, built into the structure. Its mattresses were bare of sheets or blankets. If this cabin was his dwelling, I could understand that; he would have no need of a covering at night, not with all that golden hair all over him.

A fireplace was part of the east wall. It was a large hearth, made of fieldstones cemented together, with a huge open space big enough to cook half a deer. Maybe the man who owned this place was a hunter. There might even be a rifle or two around, plus some bullets. I glanced around the room but I didn't see anything even hinting of firearms. The owner must have taken them home with him, fearing they might rust over the winter in this cold air.

The Un-human was making a fire in the fireplace,

kneeling and crumpling up old newspapers from a nearby pile, placing twigs and kindling on it. He brought a couple of logs closer, propping them at an angle against the stonework. As flame gathered inside the hearth, I stepped nearer its growing warmth.

I bent and lifted a log, trying to help him. He eyed me with a puzzled glance, then reached out with one huge hand and took the log away from me, putting it down into the fire. In a few minutes, blue and red flames were licking around the length of dry wood.

I found a small rocking chair and moved it closer to the burning wood. I folded my hands and placed elbows on my knees. I smiled at the beast-man and pointed to a three-legged stool near my feet. "Sit down, Ken. Please."

He did not understand me, it was plain. So I hopped out of the rocker and put my rump on the stool and sat there smiling up at him. I pointed at him, then at the stool. I repeated the action, and then his shaggy, golden head nodded.

"Sit," he said. "Sit."

He sat where I pointed. I clapped my hands as I might at the efforts of a child. At his angry expression I stopped and muttered apologetically. I got the feeling that his was an extremely intelligent mind trapped inside a prison of a body. Gestures he could understand, but not words. It was as if he had forgotten how to talk, or *could* talk, but his vocal chords would not reproduce the sounds he wanted to make.

Suddenly, he raised his right arm and pointed again at the ceiling. "Drann. Drann. Drann," he muttered, as if expecting I would show some kind of positive response.

I sighed. "I wish I understood you, but I don't. Until I can teach you to talk, I'm absolutely stumped."

He was still staring down at me, waiting for me to speak, so I began touching objects, giving them a

name. Rocker. Stool. Floor. Lamp. Fire. Cabin. I said them slowly, with the proper enunciation, and waited for him to imitate the sounds I made. I was definitely making progress, no doubt about that.

Then I saw he was paying no attention to me, but was standing with his head tilted as though he saw or heard something with a sense only he possessed. He was making low, growling sounds in his throat.

He whirled and leaped for the cabin door, yanking a small knapsack off a wooden peg. He turned back, reached out a great, hairy hand, and tugged me to my feet.

"Drann!" he shouted, and flung me over a shoulder.

I bumped and tossed like a bag of grain atop his shoulder as he raced through the dark forest. It was night, the stars flared overhead, but the Un-human ran between the tree boles as if it were brightest day. I realized dazedly that with his animal powers, the forest would be no mystery to him.

He ran and ran, for miles.

Gradually, I grew aware that he was heading for the huge nuclear energy plant that fed electricity to the homes in Valley Rill, to the Institute, to street lamps and oil burners. Coldness ran down my spine. What did he want with the big experimental plant? Was that what he meant by the word *drann*? No, I didn't think this could be its meaning. He had always pointed upward when he spoke it.

He paid no heed to my yells or to the thumpings on his broad back with my fists. I finally desisted out of sheer weariness after a time. I was his baggage; I had to be content to lie there until he put me down.

From our back trail, which was all I could see unless I tried to push erect with my hands on his shoulder—and that was too tiring a posture to hold for very long—I knew we were coming down off the slope of Gnome Hill. Below us lay the huge, sprawling mass of

the electric company buildings, with its circuit breakers and high tension lines, its massive generators thrusting their blue-black bulk upward into the moonlight like giant mushrooms brooding over the smaller buildings, and the wire fence surrounding the entire compound.

What did the Un-human want at the electric company?

He was heading toward it, running more swiftly. His right arm held me pinned to his right shoulder, like a steel bar from which I couldn't escape. We were on the parking lot, racing between the cars of the night-time workers, heading straight for the locked wire fencing that lifted upward to fifteen feet. I asked myself if he meant to jump over that barrier.

He swung me to the ground. When I staggered, his hand went out to catch me by the arm and hold me steady. Then he drew the knapsack around from his left shoulder, reached into it and lifted out a slim, metal rod.

I blinked at the sight of it. What was that thing? He seemed familiar with it, he lifted it and pointed one end at the fencing. He touched the other end with a finger. A green beam ran from the rod to the fence. And suddenly there was a huge hole in the fence through which a man could drive a pick-up truck. I pushed my hair back, stared at the rod goggle-eyed.

"What is it? Where'd you get it?"

He shook his head, reached out and caught me up again. He ran through the hole in the fence and used the rod to eliminate a door into one of the main buildings. He walked forward on silent feet.

A man turned the corridor corner. The Un-human increased his speed so that, before the man could open his mouth and cry a warning, the beast-man had caught him by the side of the face with the back of his furry hand. It was not a hard blow, the Un-human seemed almost casual about the whole thing, but the man went

backward as if propelled by a catapult. He slammed into the wall and sagged downward, laying limp.

The Un-human never broke stride. He raced on, paused now and then, standing absolutely motionless, as if a part of his brain, or some sense the bionics engineers had built into him, were searching for a certain place.

At last he turned into the engine room.

The throb and thunder of the dynamos and turbines was deafening. The shaggy man put me on my feet, then turned the slim metal rod toward the huge generator. The green beam hissed, eating at the metal. In moments the dull thuddings of engines sputtering to a halt made me catch my breath.

I yelled, "No! Ken—what are you doing?"

Only the quiet beam from the metal rod was my answer. It hit the turbines. The shower of sparks from the exploding machine blinded me. My hands went up to shut out that brilliance. I tried to fight the beast-man, but he held me with a hand on my forearm as if unconscious of my presence. The narrow rod played back and forth. There were more sparks and the high pitched screech of metal breaking, collapsing in upon itself.

Shouts and yells sounded all around us.

Men were racing in from flung-open doors. They slid to a halt at sight of the Un-human plus little old me, and at the rod that was almost lost in the immensity of his huge, hairy hand.

The men were not armed, and they sensed the unleashed power in the seven foot body at which they stared. They watched while he destroyed the great generators that turned steam from the nuclear reactor and the heat exchanger into electricity. The air was filled with the stink of burning, molten metal.

The Un-human whirled, and throwing me back over his right shoulder, raced from the huge chamber into a

corridor. Men shrank back against the hall walls at sight of him. Other men were dialing the police to report the invasion of a giant, golden bear into the Interstate Electric Corporation's nuclear power plant, and his destruction of its engines.

But the Un-human was not done with his task. He sought out the underground chambers that contained the heat exchangers and the nuclear reactor. He did not go into those vast rooms; he used the metal rod to eliminate walls and fired into the rooms at the big machines until they were molten, bubbling metal, incapable of functioning.

Then he turned and ran, with me over a shoulder, to the sound of police sirens screaming up from town. High in the hills behind the little town of Valley Rill, he paused to listen to those shrill sounds. A part of his brain must have been remembering they were signals of alarm and dimly realized that these noises involved him and what he had just done. A spasm of frustrated anger crossed his hairy face.

He put his hands on my hips and lifted me down off his shoulders as if I weighed no more than a rag doll. His features worked into a scowl, and I knew he was concentrating fiercely. He was going to try and tell me something, something very important. I held my breath, waiting. If I could break through this barrier of non-communication that stood between us, maybe I could finally get to help him.

His forefinger pointed downward at the nuclear power station. Then he pointed at the sky. His face made even more horrible contortions, and I told myself I was a real ding-dong. He was making those grimaces not because he was concentrating, but because he was trying to warn me of a danger!

"Danger?" I whispered, eyes wide.

He thought about the word, sighed; then when he shook his head in puzzlement, I knelt down. I caught a

stone and pretended to hit my head with it, then lay down as if dead.

"Danger? Death?" I repeated.

He nodded his head hesitantly. I reached into his knapsack, drew out the thin metal rod. He became alarmed at that, but I shook my head and caught it by the narrow muzzle. He must have seen I could not possibly fire the damned thing holding it by that end, because he relaxed a little.

I pretended to spray the ground, and all around me. The Un-human nodded eagerly. "Drann, Drann," he grunted, pointing at the rod and at the sky.

I sagged a little. Apparently, if I read him right, there was a danger in the sky that was directed at the Earth and that would destroy the Earth unless it were stopped. How he had found this out, I hadn't the faintest notion.

A meeting with The General was called for. I wondered what relation his destruction of the power station had to do with these *Drann*. My feminine intuitions told me they were related; I was positive of that. The beast-man was making sounds in his throat to reassure me, I believe.

As if losing patience with my mentality, he reached out his big, hairy arms for me, swung me up over a shoulder again, holding me as if I were a baby, and began to run. He angled his flying feet higher into the hills, where tall conifers grew.

I made no attempt to escape. I knew better than that. I was his sole link with humanity and we needed him just as much, if not more, than he needed us. Besides, with his incredible speed and frightful strength, I couldn't have gotten away from him if I'd wanted to.

I was shivering, however. The Un-human realized I must be damn cold in just that transparency I had on. His own golden hide protected him from the chill winds

that searched these high places beyond the town. I hoped he'd find a sheltered spot in the woods and build another fire.

He was running like a frightened wind now.

Behind us, the wail of the siren faded out.

We came to a deep cave in a rocky hillside, in which several flat rocks had been placed about a circle of soot-blackened stones set in a rock ring. Inside the ring were the charred remnants of other fires at other times. I sat down gratefully on one of the rocks when he swung me off his shoulder, and watched him gathering twigs and breaking off branches to start a fire.

When he was done, he had a respectable fire laid. He towered gigantic above his little stone ring, and beckoned me with a hand. I sighed and got to my feet.

From my pocket I brought out a gold cigarette lighter. I struck a flame and touched it to the dry leaves and small twigs he had placed at the bottom of the pile. A tiny blaze grew, became larger, spread swiftly upward. The warmth of the fire felt good. I stood there and held my hands out over it.

I was not at all uncomfortable with the beast-man. As a matter of fact, I liked him. This was not the ordeal I figured it might be when I'd hopped out of the white Mustang and ran after him like an eager beaver ready to do my duty.

His destruction of the power station had made me wonder about him, I admit. The little confrontation we'd had in the hills, when his gestures made me understand that some danger threatened Earth from the sky, had restored my confidence in him.

Looking into his eyes now, I knew for certain that he was sane. And damned intelligent, even if he couldn't talk. I could not explain why he had destroyed the power station, but I realized there was a good reason, a reason I just didn't understand as yet.

I knew revenge had no part of it; the nuclear reactor

and its compound had had nothing to do with altering his body to this monstrosity. The Bionics Research Institute had done that. Yet he stayed far away from the compound. The Institute had its own energy sources; he might have destroyed them if he had been vengeful, but he seemed uninterested in vengeance.

If his motive was not revenge—what was it?

I rubbed my hands together over the growing flames. Their warmth seeped through my thin Niel Bieff dress, and felt very good on my almost-bare skin. I saw that the Un-human was running his eyes over my body that the flames revealed.

And if I wasn't mistaken, there was something like sex hunger in their grey depths. Well, hey! I thought. How about that? I guess I'd better keep his mind on other things. The gang back at L.U.S.T. would have gotten a charge out of this situation. Here I was—me, Oh Oh Sex herself!—trying to invent ways to keep from having sex.

Maybe I could still teach him to talk.

I pointed at the flames. "Fire. Fire." I said.

After a couple of grunts and croaks, he got out an unmistakable, "Fire." I smiled and nodded my head at him. Then I squatted down, stockinged knees and thighs glinting purple in the firelight, and made as if to stretch my hand into the flames. I pulled it back suddenly, crying out.

"Hurt! Hurt!"

He rose to his full height, tongue moving about his lips. He pointed upward. He growled, "Hurt! Hurt!" His thickly muscled arms moved around in a half circle. "Hurt, hurt!" and he pointed at the black, starry sky outside the cave entrance.

I looked up at him thoughtfully from my squatting position. "I'm getting through to you, I think. There's something damn dangerous up there in the sky. Dangerous to Earth and all the people on it. Am I right?

... no, scratch that. You can't tell me whether I am or not.

"I'll go on the assumption that I am right. Ohhh! How I wish you could talk, so you could tell me just what it is we ought to be afraid of! Spacemen coming here to destroy Earth ... or inhabit it and kill off the people on it ... or a comet streaking through space and heading here—I must read more science-fiction, I can see that! But, how could you have learned about a danger like that?"

He stared down at me, not understanding my words. To him, they must have been gibberish. I sighed and straightened up. The fire was very hot now. Its warmth filled the cavern, the walls of which shut out the mountain breezes. I moved a few feet away from the fire and perched myself behind on a flat rock, never taking my eyes from his face.

"It will take a long time for me to teach you to talk, Ken," I murmured. "There are people trained for that sort of thing, they could do it faster than I. If I could take you there, let them do the job—we might have you talking inside a week."

He stood silent in the flickering firelight, like a golden statue. His grey eyes returned my stare. It was impossible to tell what his thoughts were. I had to try and convince him to come with me.

So I held out my hand. I smiled up at him, inviting him to trust me. When he took my hand, I tugged him toward the cavern entrance.

I pointed ahead of me at the night beyond the cave mouth. "Come with me, Ken. We will teach you to talk. You will be able to tell us what that danger is, then."

He listened, head tilted to one side, as if trying to understand my words. I tugged on his hand again, my smile widening. My finger pointed to my mouth, then to his.

"Talk. Talk," I repeated.

"Talk," he said, and nodded his head. "Ken talk."

"Yes, oh yes!" I breathed excitedly. "When you can talk you can tell me anything you want me to know."

He moved forward a step, then two.

"Hurry, hurry," I laughed, delighted at my success.

His booming laughter echoed my own. He snatched me up in an arm, perched me on his left shoulder. He began to run.

It was wild, riding his shoulder this high in the air. I would lean down from time to time, pointing so he could see the direction I was indicating. We must go to the Institute, find Doctor Newmann. I could tell him everything that had happened, instruct him to find the teacher best fitted to teach the beast-man to talk.

In a sense, I would be making up to him for the changes which Rhea Parker and Adrian Trent had caused in his formerly human body. I felt tears spring into my eyes. Oh, yes! It would be like paying him damages for making him into something un-human. He would go on living as a beast-man, but at least he would be alive. As Kenneth Frost, in his diseased body, he would have died more than a year ago.

The stars were glittering diamonds in the dark sky overhead, the moon was a crescent to the south. As I bounced and swayed on the broad shoulder of my two-legged mount, I felt that I was riding through a nightmare. This could only be something out of a dream.

And yet it was all real enough. I thought about Rhea Parker and how her hands and those of poor Adrian Trent had fashioned their monster-man out of a hundred and twenty pound human being. It wasn't their fault Kenneth Frost had lost the power to ask Rhea Parker if she felt like a mother to the Un-human. In a sense, she had given him birth.

The baying of distant hounds brought me back to the moment. I felt a stab of fear moving down into my

spine, chilling me. I had been brought up close to mountains such as these through which the Un-human was running. I knew the sound of hunting dogs when I heard them.

"Oh, no. Don't let them catch us," I breathed.

The beast-man had heard the dogs. He was snarling low in his throat as he angled his run away from those savage bayings. His thickly padded feet leaped across a gully, bounded between the tree boles, hurdled a big boulder. He was trying to prevent low-hanging branches from striking my body, I realized, but he was torn between his consideration for me and the stark need for speed.

Alone, he would have had no problem, I realized. Alone, he could have outrun the hounds, left them behind as if they were running on a treadmill. The weight of my body slowed him down, brought him into danger.

It spoke well for him that he did not dump me unceremoniously and race off to freedom and safety in this forest that had become his home. It showed a willingness to cooperate that would make good sense with Malcolm Newmann when it came time for me to marshal arguments about a speech teacher. Doctor Newmann could not very well deny me that favor if I brought the Un-human into the Institute as my companion.

The beating of my heart slowed a little.

We were going to make it! The hounds were far behind now. Even if they were following our scent, they would never be able to overtake us before the doors of the Institute slammed shut on us. We would be safe. Safe!

I laughed aloud in my pleasure.

The beast-man ran down a slope, up a slight hill. The wind was not so cold down here where the dog-

woods grew and the big rocks were fewer. Soon now, we would be able to see the mountain road.

"Hold it—right there!"

I turned a frightened face. Fifty yards away a man with a double-barreled shotgun to his shoulder was aiming at us. He wore a heavy mackintosh over a bulky sweater; there was a red baseball cap perched on the side of his head. He was big, I had no way of telling how old he might be, but the steadiness of the shotgun barrels told me he had used the gun before, that he might even be an expert with it.

"Don't shoot," I yelled.

Under my thighs, I felt the powerful muscles of the Un-human tensing. My palm patted him like a pet animal. I hoped it was a soothing gesture.

I called, "We're on our way to the Bionics Institute! Please don't shoot—you'll hit me, too."

"Get down off that thing—if you can," the man yelled.

The Un-human had halted. He stood restive, wanting to leap away to freedom, yet afraid that a false move might cause the hunter to press his triggers. I heard his harsh breathing, not that of a man exhausted by running but that of an animal caught in a man-made trap from which he saw no escape.

"Don't move, Ken—please," I begged.

The hunter was coming forward slowly, the shotgun still at his shoulder. He was shouting, "No, over here. Over here!"

In a few minutes, there would be many hunters and some of the dogs around us. Then even the mighty muscles of the Un-human would not be able to carry him out of here. I twisted fingers together, almost tearful. I knew what would happen, they would put Kenneth Frost behind bars and throw away the key. They would look on him as a dangerous freak, a madman.

I was realist enough to know that none of my tears,

nor my pleading words, would make them change their minds. Even the pleas of Doctor Malcolm Newmann would have no effect on the authorities.

"Put her down," the hunter yelled.

The Un-human stood motionless.

I cried, "Don't shoot! He doesn't understand. I'll make him lower me—but for God's sake, keep your finger easy on those triggers."

"Just do like I say, lady. Get down off him."

I wriggled, tapped the beast-man. He looked up at me, his intelligent eyes glinting. There was a message in those eyes I ought to read, I knew, but I could not even guess at what they were telling me.

His hands lifted to my waist. He swung me down, set me gently on the pine-needled forest floor. His lips twitched into a reassuring smile.

"Now get back away from him," the hunter shouted.

The shotgun was still at his shoulder. He was closer, perhaps fifty feet away. At that distance, a shotgun blast would blow the Un-human in half. I felt terror move in me, not for me but for that which had been Kenneth Frost.

I turned slowly to face the hunter. "Put that gun down," I cried. "You idiot! This is a man, here—a man who's been experimented on. He doesn't understand words yet, I've been teaching him. If you shoot, you'll spoil everything we've been doing at the Institute."

"Don't know nothing about that, lady. All I know is, we got orders to shoot to kill—on sight. Only reason I haven't shot yet is, you're with him. Now get out of my way."

I stood without moving, feeling tiny against the sheer golden bulk of the beast-man. My voice cracked as I cried out, "No! You mustn't shoot him. Listen, it's very important. He—he knows something about a danger—in the stars."

The man grinned at me. Up this close, by the faint

starlight and the radiance of the moon, I could see that he was in middle age, with a lean look about him that told me he was used to tramping these woods, to trapping and killing animals for food—or even for the sheer fun of slaying.

The shotgun barrels lifted. The hunter chuckled, "I can shoot over your head, lady. You won't get hurt too much, just peppered a little with buckshot on that pretty face of yours. Now do what I tell you—get the hell out'n my way!"

"No," I wailed, spreading my arms to shield the beast-man. I could feel the golden hairs of his middle against the back of my head, that sensed also the animal warmth of his body.

Then the hairs were gone and the cold wind blew on my back. The hunter shouted and swung his shotgun to one side. I knew the Un-human had moved, had taken his giant body away from mine to protect me.

I stumbled, trying to run. My eyes swept the forests for a sign of the Un-human. He was nowhere to be seen. Then the hunter cursed thickly. I whirled toward him.

He was steadying the shotgun. He must have caught sight of the beast-man and was preparing to give him both barrels. I screamed and lunged, but I was far too late.

The shotgun blasted red flame into the night.

CHAPTER SIX

The blast deafened me. I stood frozen, not able to move so much as an eyelid. I didn't dare turn my head for fear I'd see the Un-human sprawled out on the forest floor in his convulsive death throes. Then I heard the man curse.

He must have missed him to react like that. So I took a fast peep and I didn't see anything of my shaggy friend. It was then I lost my temper.

"You stupid, senseless dolt!" I screamed.

I raced for him, practically flying over the ground. I landed on him with a karate chop and the full weight of my girl-girl body. He stumbled and dropped the shotgun. My hands darted out, closed on his wrist. I swung it up and down and then moved it in a big circle. My feet were planted solidly by this time.

The hunter yelped in surprise as his body flew through the air, doing a somersault, and landed heavily on the pine-needled ground. He lay there gagging, the wind knocked half out of his lungs. I snatched up the fallen shotgun and hurled it a dozen feet away.

"Lady," he panted. "What in hell's the idea?"

"The idea is very simple, you nincompoop! I was bringing that man back to the Institute. He's learned something damned important to the human race—and we've got to get him to tell us what it is."

I gave him a hand up, seeing that all the cockiness was gone out of him. He seemed a little shamefaced,

because it took an effort of will for his eyes to meet mine.

"I figured I'd save the police a job," he muttered. "I've been huntin' these woods since I was a yearling, practically. I know every foot of 'em. The police don't know 'em like I do."

"You scared him off. I'll never find him again."

Defensively the man grated, "Hell! He destroyed the nuclear reactor and the Valley Rill power station just an hour or so ago. It came over the radio. I heard about it and loaded up my ten gauger."

"Well, unload it. And take me out of here."

He nodded glumly and picking up his rifle, extracted the spent shells. He was a nice enough guy; he'd just gone off half-cocked as so many of us will when there's something we think we can do to help. I got to know him a little better as he walked ahead of me down the mountain slopes.

His name was Joe Morton. He was a bachelor who lived in a house on the edge of town. He was in his early forties, he had worked hard building up a business—he owned three filling stations within a fifty mile radius—and he spent his working time, three hours a day, traveling back and forth supervising his mechanics and gas-pumpers. The rest of his time was his own.

"Got nobody dependin' on me," he grunted, turning to help me down off a rock ledge. "Nobody to care whether I come 'r go. I'm my own man."

"You're a pretty good tracker, I'll bet," I offered.

"None better."

"I'll bet you could find that big golden giant again, if you had to."

His grin told me he was very confident of his tracking abilities. I went on, "I may take you up on that, if we have to locate him again in a hurry." I added that I was working for Uncle Sam, that the Un-human was

too valuable to be killed. The government wanted to recover him, but alive and well.

"Yeah, I'm sorta sorry 'bout that." He rubbed his bristly chin with a big, tanned hand. "I guess I acted without thinking. All I could see was my shotgun and that critter in front of it."

"No harm's been done, thank God."

"Give you a lift, lady?" he volunteered.

I slid into his pick-up truck and let him drive me to Rhea Parker's apartment. I had to get into a different kind of dress, it was too cold up in this mountain country to wear the delicate originals I might get away with in the warmer autumn weather in New York. Joe Morton had been eyeing me with lights dancing in his dark brown eyes; I gathered that he felt I was an easy make.

I got out of his truck in front of Rhea's place, shook his hand and told him I would be in touch. Then I marched into the converted private house, wagging my behind after me. He didn't leave the curb until after I closed the door behind me.

Rhea was sound asleep. I shut her bedroom door and tiptoed to the telephone in the front room. I dialed The General.

It took me ten minutes to clue him in about what was going on in this remote corner of Uncle Sam land.

"Use your influence to call off the dogs!" I begged him. "They'll scare my beast-man out of here, and we don't want that. He knows something we've got to know, chief. Something so damned big it scares me."

"I'll put in a few calls, Eve. And great work . . . keep on the ball and in touch. If you want help, just yell."

I didn't need help yet.

I slithered out of my Bieff no-dress and the purple pantihose and crawled in between the sheets. My body shivered for a while but my naturally warm blood was doing its job and in a few minutes the bed with its

blankets over me was toasty warm. My eyes closed. I drifted into dreamland.

When I mention dreamland, I could have called it nightmare County. Wowie! I was married to Joe Morton and we had a baby in my dream. Right you are. The Un-human. Only he was about the size of a baby and soft and cuddly. He was like an agile young monkey, swinging all around our house, from staircase to chandelier, out of a window and into a tree, and made great jumps up and down the staircase without ever touching a single tread.

I was yelling at him all the time.

Then the baby Un-human was nestled in my arms and I had a big breast outside my dress and I was feeding him. The tug of his mouth was giving me erotic sensations, as a baby's lips are said to do. But the more I tried to push him away, the firmer were the graspings of his mouth on my distended nipple. I finally started to get hot.

"No," I whimpered. "Please no. It isn't right."

"Sssssh, darling. Sssssh," breathed a voice.

The Un-human? But the Un-human couldn't talk!

My eyes opened wide in my astonishment. I found myself looking at dawn light filtering into a strange bedroom. There was a warm body inside the sheets with me, and soft lips suctioning my nipple very gently, very tenderly. And there was an erotic fire in my middle that caused me to writhe my thighs together.

"Please? Let me?"

This was Rhea Parker with her face at my breast. She looked up at me now, flushed and slightly frightened as to what my reaction might be to her caresses. Her soft, red mouth was still pursed like that of an infant, and her loose, brown hair was rumped and tangled, giving her a wanton look.

"You were yelling and screaming, you woke me up," she told me. "I tried to—to soothe you down, but you

wouldn't pay any attention. Then when I threw back the covers to shake you awake—I discovered you hadn't put anything on when you fell asleep."

Her lips touched my firm breast, kissing it gently. "I just couldn't resist crawling in with you. If I've offended you, I'll go back to my own bed."

Her voice trailed off.

I put my hand down, cupping the back of her head and pulled her face down to my erotically aroused breast again. Maybe I needed this comfort of loving after what I'd been through. I don't know. I do know I am easily aroused, that I am bi-sexual by nature, and my nickname of Oh Oh Sex doesn't come undeserved.

My palm ran down her back, under her frilly nightie. Her skin was warm, smooth. I liked its feel. The tugging of her lips on my nipple grew wilder, and she threw a bare leg over mine, cramming her hairy *mons veneris* against my thigh. Back and forth she rocked, whimpering deep in her throat.

She was one wanting female.

Well, maybe I was wanting, too. Because I tugged my breast from her mouth and slid down in the bed until my open mouth came down on her mouth. Our tongues met and thrust together. My hands were sliding up and down her smooth sides, gently caressing. Under my palms I felt the electricity of her sexual need.

"You need me," I breathed.

"Oh, God—yes! Eve—please!"

I understood, of course, that it was not my body she needed so much as it was any female body. Her natural instincts had turned her away from Adrian Trent because he was a man. This lesbian trait in her was not to be scorned, nor pitied; she was as helpless against it as a nymphomaniac is against her constant urgings, or as a man sick with fever.

I think our society today lends a more knowledgeable ear to the complaints of those among us who are

indifferent to the cries of Priapus, and who prefer instead the softer accents of Sappho, than have other ears in past centuries. Society has become more intelligent; society knows that there are no sharp borders in the world. Science has played its part in this sympathetic approach, what with its discussions of male and female hormones and the like.

But whatever the reason . . .

She was shivering steadily as her warm wet mouth feasted on my lips and tongue. Soft palms slithered over my smooth sides and down across my hips. Their play upon my loins moistened my flesh, driving a sharp, pungent need into my femininity. I writhed upon those knowing fingers, crying out as Mnasidika might have cried to the toyings of Bilitis.

Deep into membraneous flesh slid those wriggling, writhing fingers, carrying a kind of madness with them. I wailed in my throat as my thighs widened helplessly; I told myself that Rhea Parker had been with other women at other times, and that her skill was a thing developed over the years.

My naked hips arched to her fingerplay, my voice echoed the throbbing of my heart as I cried out softly, again and again. In my sexual affairs, I find I usually must teach a man or a woman certain delicate nuances of passion, but with this starved woman in her thirties, I delighted in playing the innocent virgin about to be seduced.

Her mouth was wet and open, trailing over my hardened breasts. Her teeth were gentle, yet demanding, as they sought and bit, ever so tenderly, the up-thrust brown flesh of my pulpy nipples. I caressed her smooth bare back, I ran quivering fingertips over her meaty buttocks.

"What would you like?" she breathed against my breast.

"Anything," I whispered. "I've had such a hard time—out there in the hills."

Her mouth sipped at my left nipple. "Was it so awful?"

"It was cold, cold."

The mouth was sliding downward, away from my rocklike breasts. "And now? Are you cold now, Eve darling?"

"Oh, no—no!"

Across my bellyflesh went her lips. Up and down she kissed my heaving belly, pausing at times to dip her tonguetip into my navel and whisper words of adoration against the pallid skin she wetted with her kisses. Oh, she knew the fires she was lighting, heaping on the fuel of her fingers that never paused in their steady wriggings.

My body flopped about like a gaffed fish, out of control. My flesh was almost steaming. I whined, I mewled. My hands went out, hooking her smooth leg at a knee, drawing that knee toward me. My mouth on her own outer thigh, kissing.

"I want you, Eve! I have to have you. I've been dreaming about you so much—ever since you first came here. I die at nights when I wake up and know that you're here with me—so close—just in this other bed. . . ."

"Yes, yes. I know," I whispered.

Surprise made her lift her flushed face. "You knew?"

I smiled and lay flat on my back, though I ran my palm up and down her somewhat heavy thigh. "Oh, yes. I've known since the first day. In my line of work, I get to recognize the fact that men and women aren't the plaster saints that religion would have them be."

My mouth browsed up her thigh to her hip as I slid out from under her. "We're all of us flesh and blood, and we have rather special—lusts, shall I say—that are personal and unique."

My head on her scented belly made her cry out softly. I was turning from the seducee into the seducer. I am a very tender-hearted frail, the needs of a man or woman touch a vein of sympathetic understanding deep inside me. Rhea Parker needed female love, her flesh agonized for it.

If I could, I meant to feed that flesh.

The thought touched my mind that I might be doing this because I was working for L.U.S.T. In the past I've used sex to get information or to save my life or for half a dozen other reasons. It is part of my secret agent job. I was learning that working for Science Division might pay me some extra dividends as well.

My hands were on her inner thighs, gently nudging.

Her thighs widened. Her head went back into the crumpled bedcovers as she moved it from side to side, moaning steadily. She felt the bite of carnality, exposed to my stare. Yet she did not cover herself, but rather enjoyed the display she was making.

I whispered, "How did Pamela Frost learn about Ken?"

Her eyes widened in something between dismay and disbelief. They told me quite plainly that unless Rhea Parker was a greater actress than Bernhardt, she knew absolutely nothing about the matter.

Sure, it was cruel of me to do it, but it was damn important that I learn the answer to that question. Then a wave of sympathy flowed over me. This woman was innocent, it was cruel to leave her like this, suspended between the hell of her tormented body and the heaven of sensual fulfillment.

My head bent swiftly.

Her scarlet pansy needed assuagement, so I bathed it with my lips and tongue, very gently and very learnedly. I have made a study of the love strokings of the Sapphic society, I knew that the nerve endings are few and far between inside the female sheath, but that they

are situated in abundance at the outer labia and in the *labia minora*. Naturally, the little growth the Greeks used to call the *myrton*, the myrtleberry, is especially sensitive to caresses and to kisses because of its many nerve ends.

I worked on those nerve ends with flailing tongue.

Rhea howled and jerked, thumping her buttocks on the bedcovers. Her hands came down to capture my head, making sure I would not escape. I felt no need to run away, I was enjoying my task. There is a smidge of the masochist in us all, maybe; at any rate, I enjoyed playing the subordinate role. At least for a little while.

And so I thrust pleasure upon this mewling woman for many long minutes, gripping her buttocks with my fingers, holding her helpless before my attentions. Time seemed to stop for us both, and then I heard her crying out, reaching for me, so I turned toward her and we assumed that classic love pose often termed *ainame* by the Japanese, who are very learned in the love arts.

Her smooth palms were moving up and down my thighs, stroking gently, teasing my flesh even as my own fingers caressed the globes of her fleshy buttocks above my head. There is a tenderness to female love that is missing when a woman makes love to a man; maybe it is because Nature says that the man must impregnate the woman, and most males have little patience with the preliminary caresses and kisses. All they want to do is bury their manhoods and be about their own satisfactions.

With another woman it is different. She knows her own bodily reaction to caresses, she is eager to share these pleasures with another female, if only in the hope that the other female will return them.

The Sapphic sisters had long ago learned this fact. In some of them it is born full-blown, an instinctive wisdom that needs no teacher. Rhea Parker was one of these. From time to time she would abandon her

mouth-play about my femininity, turning her head to bite the fleshy insides of my spread thighs, nibbling and arousing. It was small pain, but the action of her teeth roused something savage in me.

I bit her own meaty thighs where they parted wide above my face. I bit here and there, I kissed where I had bitten. I employed the *samaushtha* kisses of the *qudhaka-dashana* bites, where no mark is left on the skin from the contact of the teeth.

"Oh God, oh God," Rhea was moaning steadily.

My teeth closed down on thighflesh with the *bindu-mala*, in which I scratched lightly with my teeth so as to leave faint red marks on her skin. These tooth-marks my tongue soothed away with tender lickings.

"You've—been—around," she panted.

"A lot of places, honey," I assured her.

Then as her open mouth came down on my own flesh, I wailed and my teeth closed on her *yoni* in the more passionate *bhujangavillika* bite. Growling, I shook my head like a wild animal. She screamed, head up and mouth wide open, as ecstasy flooded through her loins.

Her bare hips quivered and shook, beating against me.

Rhea went a little mad after this. She bent her own head, when her orgasmic frenzy had pulsed through her flesh for long minutes, and she did to me what I had done to her, with the deep bites of the *kolacharcha* that leaves empurpled skin behind them, as well as the *larat-adana* caresses of her hands.

She lifted me up out of this world.

I shook and shuddered, screaming with the satisfaction of her loving. My hips bumped and thumped across the bed, with Rhea hanging on with her long red fingernails sunk into my buttocks. I never knew how long she went on loving me up; it seemed to last for an eternity in which I hung between sky and earth, wrapped in almost unendurable pleasure.

When she was done, I was only half conscious.

She turned on the bed, crowding close. Her *myrton* was extremely large, she was extraordinarily gifted in this regard, and I was reminded of the little peasant girl possessed of an amazingly long, large myrtleberry, which was employed by a secret society of French ladies during the reign of one of the Louis kings, as a man employs his *peos* in making love.

I thought that my desire was run all out of me, but the touch of her excited *columella* roused a deep well inside my flesh so that I squirmed and panted, wrapping my arms about her nakedness, sliding a little downward so that her hanging breasts were mere inches from my mouth.

My lips sought her dangling brown nipples.

She cried out throatily and her hips went mad.

We ended up limp and exhausted, about nine o'clock.

I gathered that Rhea Parker would have died for me when she began babbling how much she adored me, how she wanted only to be near me, to kiss and caress me. She had turned on the bed and was kissing my face with strange tenderness.

I hooked an arm about her bare shoulders, drew her inside the covers so we lay warmly naked together.

Lightly I said, "There is one thing you can do for me, honey. There's a guard or a nurse or a reception girl at that Institute who doesn't keep a tight mouth about what goes on inside its walls."

I explained about my problem of discovering who had tipped off Pamela Frost about Ken's having been changed into a monster. Her eyes got bigger and bigger as I reminded her that the radio report had made no mention of his name, had suggested instead that 'an animal' had escaped.

She sat up, her heavy breasts still firmly jutting, and stared down at me. "You're perfectly right! I heard that

broadcast right here in this room. So how did she know?"

"Hunt around, but carefully. Find out if the reception girl has a friend who works for a newspaper or one of the wire services. Likewise with the male help and the other girls. Somebody who was on the night shift the night he got away must have phoned the news to somebody. Probably picked up a few bucks for the tip, even."

"I'll do it, of course." She glanced at her wristwatch, making a wry face. "I'm late for work, but these are such hectic days, I guess nobody'll really care. Can I drive you anywhere?"

"No. I've got to go back to New York to see The General. Make a report in person to him. I'll come back tomorrow."

I patted her buttocks as she turned to get out of bed. They were round, pale buttocks, soft and attractive. She dimpled a smile over her shoulder at me, wrinkling up her nose.

"Don't start that all over, sweetie—or I'll never get to work and you won't keep that appointment."

"Yeah, you're right," I smiled.

She stood naked beside the bed, stretching, yawning a little, noting how my eyes went all over her nudity. Rhea Parker had a wee bit too much flesh on her frame for the perfect female body, but those extra few pounds were spread out over her very nicely. Her breasts were big, heavy, her hips were round and soft, her thighs were somewhat thick. But all in all, she was quite a dish.

I was a lucky girl. I might have been rooming with a human broomstick. In order not to tempt either one of us too much, I waited until she was dressed and on her way before I hopped out from between the warm sheets.

I phoned the airport, got a reservation; I phoned the

taxi company. I filled an overnight bag with some necessities.

I was sitting in The General's office before two that afternoon. He was a big man, rather fleshy, with sandy-grey hair neatly trimmed. He still wore his military uniform with all its medals and decorations; he felt it gave him added authority as head of the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists. Maybe it did, it always impressed me.

I told him what had happened since my plane had set its landing gear down in Valley Rill country. He listened without speaking. I omitted the fact that I had bedded down Adrian Trent and Rhea Parker; this, I felt, was my own affair.

He scowled at me across his glass desktop. "If it hadn't been for that hunter, you'd have brought that thing in to the Institute, right? What I thought. Then you've got to go out again, Eve. Get that hunter to help track it down, pay him what . . ."

A red light blinked on his desktop amid an array of gadgets. The General glanced at it from under upraised brows. There is a *DO NOT DISTURB* sign—invisible—hanging on the door to his office whenever he has one of his agents in conference. This must be pretty damn important for Clarissa Hogsworth—hoggy to us agents—to bother him like this.

Her voice came in, clear as an alarm bell. "You'd better hear this, sir. It's a broadcast on all radio channels. It's preempted everything. . . ."

There was wild excitement in her throat. I could see her practically hopping up and down on her plush typing chair. A control switch clicked.

. . . . out beyond Jupiter and moving fast! The Pentagon is making crash preparations for trouble, the reserves are being called up, troops are being flown in from Fort Bragg and Fort Belvoir. The National Security Agency, in cooperation with the National Aero-

nautics and Space Administration, is trying to establish contact with the spaceship now, but the Army wants to be ready for trouble.

The General gaped, jaw dropping.

"Spaceship?" he gurgled.

I was a bit flabbergasted, myself.

We turn you over to Edgar Mason, our science expert. Take it away, Ed!

The high excitement was in the announcer's voice as well. I didn't blame him. After all the talk about flying saucers and UFO's and the speculation that they might come from planets outside our solar system, here, at last, we were being confronted with the real thing. My behind was on the edge of the chair and I was leaning forward, not even bothering to breathe.

Back again, folks. Well, it's all true, believe it or not. That first communiqué we had from that spaceship—at one-fifteen eastern time, twelve-fifteen central time—is not quite believable.

For you late tuners-in, that message read: Greetings to your planet, the third planet inward from the sun toward which we are speeding. We are the Andothalans, and we come on a journey of good will and friendship from the planet Andoth.

That was all of it. It was in English, strangely enough, but it was monitored and recorded all over the world.

We cannot tell what star-sun the planet Andoth circles at this point. We will have to wait and speak with the Andothalans first, before we can know this. But one thing we do know: their science is far advanced, compared to ours. The Andothalans possess spaceships that travel at speeds immeasurably greater than our own. As of now, their ship is passing Jupiter. Jupiter is three hundred million miles from Earth. Yet we have calculated that their ship will be circling above the

airport in Washington to which we will direct them, by five o'clock this evening.

The General gawked at me; I gawked back.

He rasped, "We'll have to be there, Eve. I'm pulling you off the monster case *pro tem*, to act as part of our security guard. You're about the only agent I have on hand at such short notice."

The science editor was talking again.

How the people of Andoth are able to speak English is a moot question. We have surmised that the flying saucers we've been reading about for the past twenty years come from this same planet. I guess they wanted to familiarize themselves with us before they paid us a visit—like neighbors looking over the newcomers to a town before paying a welcome call.

He went on and on while we sat mesmerized.

This was the vision of Hugo Gernsbach coming to life, science fiction taking on flesh and blood qualities. Visitors from outer space! Coming to Earth! Ch. I'd read the old masters of the genre, I knew the way the plots ran. I told myself the writers were wrong. Wrong!

There was no danger to Earth from this arrival out of distant space. No plan to enslave the world. The Andothalans were bringing a cornucopia of good things for us Earth people; the wise use of nuclear or solar energies, the means to do away with all poverty and hunger on our planet, the reconstruction of our troubled cities, perhaps even a true understanding of the brotherhood of man.

My heart beat with promised happiness. The dream of old Thomas More, he put forth in his *Utopia*, was upon us. This would be the golden age of Man, the coming of Nirvana, or the Elysian Fields of the ancient Greeks. Shangri-la and Eden reborn.

Then I remembered something.

The Un-human!

I sat there with my eyes wide. The Drann! His

golden finger had been pointed at the sky. Did he want to indicate the space out of which the people of Andoth were approaching? And the Drann; were they the Andothalans? They meant no good to Earth if the Un-human were to be believed.

I opened my mouth to say something of this to my boss.

He shushed me with a waved hand as he came bounding out of his chair. "No time for chitchat now, Eve. Let's get with it. On the ball and all that sort of thing. You'll come with me to Washington, of course, in the service helicopter. We ought to get there in no time at all."

I had no opportunity in the elevator, nor in the lobby of our L.U.S.T. building compound, to give my side of the argument. I had to make do with a brief suggestion in the luxurious limousine that whipped us through the traffic toward La Guardia.

The General stared at me, horrified.

"Stop them? Are you mad? On the say-so of an animal? Besides, you're not at all sure that's what he meant."

He had me there. I defended my female instincts all the way to the airport, but he only brushed away my protests.

"What can I do, Eve?" he asked, reasonably enough. "Shoot them down in cold blood? You must guess at their tremendous technological advances. Surely they'll have weapons that will cut us down like tenpins if we make an aggressive move."

"You could arrest them!"

"You're pulling my leg! And make ourselves the world's laughing stock? Russia is green with envy that they're landing *here* as it is. So's France and Great Britain! Some of the smaller members of the United Nations are sounding off about why one of the most

privileged countries in the world gets to act for the rest of the planet."

"No, no. We're going to behave ourselves. If that damn Un-human thing shows up, you're going to kill it with a well-placed bullet. Understand?"

I understood, all right. But I argued all the way to the airport and inside the helicopter, and then while we were in the air.

I got absolutely no place.

A second limousine was on hand at Washington Airport to whisk us out of the ordinary run of air traffic toward a section of the vast, roped-off field for the landing of the spaceship. The mob at the airport was frightening in its size; everybody in the District of Columbia was on hand to greet our cousins from space, it seemed.

Congressmen were a dime a dozen; there was high brass from the Pentagon, navy admirals in blue and gold, senators and their wives, newspapermen, television cameras and reporters. Hoary-headed scientists and astronomers, plus a couple of famous astrologers, could be picked out of the crowd. Marines in dress uniform, rifles at attention, guarded the sanctum sanctorum of the landing site.

Everybody waited breathlessly.

Me, more than anybody. Because my mind kept telling me that these were the Drann and they intended something fearful to us Earth people, if the Un-human could be believed. They had to be! Nothing else made any sense. Now at long last, I understood the beast-man!

A loudspeaker blared to life.

"Attention, please! The alien spaceship is speeding past the moon, coming Earthward at tremendous speed. In fifteen minutes it will be landing according to a message just received."

Talk buzzed all around me, the bigwigs just as gos-

sipy about what was going to happen as the people. The President was speaking in low tones to the Secretary of State, with the Secret Service men hemming them in somewhat nervously. After all, who knew how an alien might shoot? Or what.

Then there was a faint silvery dot in the sky.

The dot grew larger, larger.

I don't know what we all expected to see. Maybe a different version of one of the Apollo spacecraft that had touched down on the moon. Or a flying saucer. A silver ball, maybe. Or a cigar-shape that would tower a hundred and fifty stories high, bigger even than our largest skyscraper.

The reality was a bit startling.

It was a box about five hundred feet high, five hundred feet wide; a square, like a child's block in solid silver, magnified a great number of times. It soared downward with the lightness of a feather, sunlight reflecting off its highly polished surfaces with almost blinding brilliance.

The only concession to the fact that it was a spaceship, so far as my eyes could detect, were a number of round holes on the bottom of the thing.

Somebody muttered, "I'll bet it utilizes gravity to travel out there in space."

"Yeah, or maybe its entire surface captures and translates solar energy into some kind of fuel."

"You know how fast it was traveling?"

"I know, I know. . . ."

The words flew all around me but I was concerned only with that big silver box that was slowly settling to the tarmac. All the planes normally landing at Washington Airport had been re-routed elsewhere to clear a space for this first interplanetary landing on Earth in all history.

Nobody said anything now. Everybody was too overcome with emotion, with awe, with curiosity. What

would they be like, these Andothalans? Humanoid, like us? Or would they be reptilian, or perhaps simian like the monkeys? Maybe they were bright globes of pulsing matter, or thin tendrils hanging from a central core, like Portugese men-of-war.

With a faint thunk the ship settled down.

We waited, not speaking.

Sunlight quivered on a square of the box side facing me. A darkness grew inside that square. I realized the silver—or whatever substance it was—was quivering out of existence. This was no ordinary door at which I stared. It was an egress, yes; a way to exit and enter the ship. But it was more of a force field than a door.

It took time to break down that force field.

Then the blackness itself quivered and—was gone.

Something moved where the blackness had been.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A man came out of the spaceship.

He was tall, lean; his golden hair shone in the sunlight. He was handsome as a movie star, graceful as an Olympic athlete as he began his walk toward us. A black uniform with gold trim clung to his chest and torso and those fine, handsome legs; his feet were encased in black boots.

His smile was devastating. It included us all, it told us without a word that Mankind had come to Earth from out of the stars and that he had come with his hands bearing mighty gifts that would awe us all. What difference did it make if his technology was far superior to ours? He was one of us, he was a man.

The welcoming roar was like an atomic blast. It stirred the air around us, it rose upward toward the blue skies of Earth as no sound has ever risen. It was relief, delight, unadulterated welcome, utter happiness. I even found myself yelling until my throat was raw.

The man from the spaceship paused at that bellow. His face broke into a laugh. He raised both arms upward and a little apart, as if he knew what we were thinking and hoping. He made a magnificent sight in that uniform. It was like seeing a long-lost lover come home from the wars. After all, he was our brother, in a manner of speaking. :-

I was swept up in the maelstrom of emotion, you understand. Forgotten were my own dread surmises

and suspicions. The Drann that the Un-human had mentioned was eclipsed before the reality of this handsome man. I told myself he couldn't have meant this demigod with the curling golden hair, so tall and arrow-straight before us all.

He was mistaken. Or I was.

One of us had to be. This specimen of humanity was no conqueror. His face was alight with friendship, with pleasure at his welcome. His hands that waved so happily to the mob would deliver strange and awesome gifts to all of us. The eyes that glinted with intelligence would look upon our many problems and his mind would dismiss them as of no moment, while his tongue would explain the ways and means of overcoming them.

The President was advancing with outstretched hand.

"Welcome," his clarion voice was saying. "Welcome to Earth in the name of all its peoples."

"For this greeting, I give thanks," the man said. "I am Suradar Selm, the commander of our expedition."

His hand caught that of the President. They stood like that while flashbulbs popped and cameras clicked and television cameras zoomed in on them. Suradar Selm put his arm about the President, hugging him; the President beamed and hugged in turn.

Four more Andothalans came out of the open space that had been a force-field door. Two of them were men, two were women. I guess I stared at the women with disbelieving eyes, as did every other female within eyeball range. These dolls were something out of a movie or maybe a Playboy Club bunny list. They were graceful, their hips swayed with just the right amount of sexiness, their breasts were full and firm, their waists no more than twenty-two.

They wore a feminine version of the black and gold uniform of their commander. They came forward be-

tween the tall men flanking them, right up to the President, and they kissed him . . . on the lips yet.

He laughed excitedly. The men shook his hand.

"May I present my seconds in command," said Suradar Selm. "These girls are young, but they are captains. Grethlin Fort. Mayhal Athnor. And my other captains, Drindon Holm, Effern Tablot."

The Marines and police were having a hard time keeping back the crowd. They wanted to come closer to these newcomers from Andoth. The newsmen and cameramen had been allowed through the barriers, but nobody else. And they were having a field day. The Andothalans were not averse to the publicity. They posed with each other and with the President.

"I invite all your crew to land on Earth and be its guests," said the President after a time.

Suradar Selm shook his head even as he smiled. "I am afraid not. We do not permit planet leave for our crew, not on a strange planet, at least. You see," he went on chumily, "we don't want to start anything that might leave a bad taste in the mouths of the Earth people. Just as your own soldiers or sailors, or these fine warriors here," and he gestured at the Marines in their dress uniforms, "might want to let loose a bit of energy after being cooped up for so long a time, so too with my crew.

"Perhaps another time."

Nobody quarreled with him; the President voiced his regret and suggested that at a later date they might be given permission to stretch their legs.

A big black limousine came forward, the Presidential car. A Secret Service man opened its door. The President was bowing to Suradar Selm, gesturing him into the back seat.

A flash of golden lightning caught my eye.

It sped through the crowd, pushing men and women apart as though they were not already crushed to

sardine tightness, so closely were they packed. It broke the ring of Marines, it sped across the tarmac, almost too fast for the eyes to see.

A roar went up from the crowd. Nobody knew what was happening—except me. This was the Un-human, come to—what?

Sure, The General had told me I was coming here as a security guard, but a guard for—whom? I assumed I was to protect the President, he'd said nothing about the aliens. So I watched that furry monster streaking across the field—with everybody shouting and yelling a warning—with my hand on my Belgian Bulldog. But the revolver stayed inside my coat pocket.

The President and the Andothalans turned. I watched the expressions on the faces of the aliens. There was fear, horror, a realization of—what? I just couldn't read every nuance of those expressive faces.

Then the President acted for his world. He leaped forward between the newcomers and the Un-human, spreading his arms wide and yelling to his Secret Service men to shoot. They moved fast, but not so fast as the hairy golden beast-man. He was on top of the little group before a gun could come out on an underarm holster.

A huge, hairy hand reached past the President. It closed iron fingers on the face of the alien named Effern Tablot. It squeezed.

Effern Tablot screamed.

A gun fired. The body of the Un-human jerked.

He screamed gutturally, in frustrated rage. His great eyes roamed the group, saw all the Secret Service men with their revolvers out in the open. They hesitated about firing any more because they didn't want to spray a fan of bullets around the President. One man tried it, firing carefully. A second bullet hole appeared on the beast-man's golden hide.

Then the Un-human was gone.

He went so swiftly that nobody else could really get a bead on him. A blur he was, of hairy gold flying across the tarmac. His feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground. Then he was gone.

The President was mopping his face as the crowd bellowed. He was trying to make apologies. For the first time he had lost the tremendous cool that had swept him into office on a landslide of votes.

Commander Suradar Selm was equal to the moment. Captain Effern Tablot was being led away toward the silver ship by one of the girls as he turned to the President, putting an arm about him and giving him a hug. At the same time he blew a kiss on his other hand to the mob. They ate it up. They bellowed and shouted in delight.

The President found his tongue. "Commander Selm, I can find no words properly to convey my apologies for what has happened. This matter shall be looked into, believe me. Whatever that thing was—man or animal, I couldn't tell. . . ."

The limousine door slammed on him and his three visitors from another planet. I sagged with relief. Captain Effern Tablot had had his face mangled a little, but not too seriously. There had been no real harm done.

Oh, yeah?

"Miss Drum!" bellowed The General, right in my ear. "What in hell's the matter with you? Why didn't you shoot that thing? You knew what it was! You even told me it called those Andolthalans—drann. It knew about them. You knew about its hatred for them. So why in hell didn't you shoot?"

I said, "There were so many people . . ."

"Not when it got to the President. Before, girl. Before! While it was running across the field?"

I gulped. "I wasn't sure. . . ."

"Sure, my ass! You saw it, I can see it in your eyes . . . oh, I know the reason, all right. You think it may be right. You think those wonderful Andothalans may be monsters of some kind."

"Now, sir. . . ."

His iron hand caught my elbow. He swung me with him across the part of the field where we were standing, knocking senators and such out of our path with his burly, blocking-guard build. A couple of voices were raised in protest, but these higher-ups in Washington society and Congress knew what a powerful figure The General was. They kept their protests to a few rasped curses. I guess they figured we were on our way to get the beast-man.

"The thing is wounded," he growled. "It won't go far. How it got across two whole states without being seen is beyond me, but it did and here it was. But you've got to get there and kill it, Eve."

I thought about poor Kenneth Frost. I just couldn't do it. Sure, I've killed men and women in my career with the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists, but they've always deserved killing. I wasn't at all sure that the Un-human did.

I said, "I'll get on the job at once."

Maybe he caught the hesitation in my voice. His hand swung me around so I was facing him. "Miss Drum, hear this. Either you go out there—somewhere—and kill that beast, or you're finished at L.U.S.T.!"

I blinked, startled. He didn't mean that!

"I mean it," he yelled, reading my mind.

I said, "I'll do what I can."

"That isn't good enough!"

So I faced up to it. My chin lifted and my backbone straightened, "I'll contact the Un-human, sir. But I'm not going to shoot him down in cold blood. He was a man. He still has a man's wind, even if I can't understand it.

"He thinks that those people mean harm to Earth. Maybe they do. I'll find out what the beast-man knows. If I think he's a homicidal maniac, I'll kill him. If I think the poor thing is only trying to help us—I won't."

I almost added, 'And the hell with you!'

But I didn't. I firmed my lips and stared right back into his gimlet eyes, defiantly. He held his craggy-face-set-in-concrete pose for a full minute. Then his eyes twinkled. His lips quivered into a smile.

"Goddamn it, Eve!"

"Just suppose he's right?"

The General rubbed his bulldog jaw. "Yeah, yeah. I'm supposing. You know the President's going to be on my tail, don't you?"

"Tell him you have every agent working on the case."

The General grunted. He swung me around with a hand on my elbow again and ushered me toward the waiting limousine. Nobody got in our way. The prognathous jaw and burly shoulders of The General were enough to clear us a path.

"Not a word, mind," he growled as he ushered me into the tonneau. "Nobody knows but you and me what you're up to. If anybody asks, tell them it's none of his goddamn business." He thought about that, then added, "Except the President. If he asks, tell him you're out to get the Un-human. Which is true enough, I guess."

He dropped me off at the Mayflower on Connecticut Avenue, which is the hotel L.U.S.T. agents always stay at in Washington. My job now was to contact the beast-man and get to see him. If I could, I was to talk to him and make him understand me.

I didn't have much to go on. The Un-human was wounded; how badly, nobody but himself knew. Still,

he was much like a wounded animal; he would head for his home country around Valley Rill. I decided to hire a rented car tomorrow, pack a few things and head for the hills.

Hopefully, the Un-human would be there.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The pain in his arm was not too bad. It hurt as he put strain on the arm, but that was all. But the agony in his back was almost unendurable. He tried to put it away. He crouched now in the dark shadows of the grey street, dimly lighted by an overhead electric lamp, his thoughts rioting.

The Drann had come to Earth.

He had failed all along the line. He had destroyed the nuclear energy plant, from which they had drawn much of their needed energies for their last desperate rush across space, after their ionic engines had burst valves due to the strain of evading the clutch of a distant dwarf star.

They had stored up enough of the energy they had drawn from the nuclear plant via invisible absorption beams to make Earth. Now they were here, pretending to be like human beings. The thought of how the people cheered them sickened him. If only he could talk, reveal their grim secrets to those clamoring thousands!

But he could not. There must be something wrong with his vocal chords. The doctors and research scientists at the Institute had changed all his body, it seemed, but had neglected his talking apparatus. Well, he must do what had to be done himself.

His keen nostrils, gifted with the scenting ability of a wolf, had caught the particularly pungent odor of the aliens on the tarmac at the airport. He could smell them

out, follow them, once he latched onto that odor again. Cautiously, he moved out of the shadows.

He broke into a run. Race between the shadows until he got close enough to the hotel where they would be staying, he told himself. He had heard enough of that from a radio broadcast from a passing automobile to know its name.

Odd how his meeting with that blonde girl should have helped him with that; her trying to teach him the language her people spoke had opened up baffles deep inside his brain. He could understand human speech, a little; certainly, better than he could before.

The broadcast had been loud—teen-agers had been in the car—and very clear with the careful enunciation of the trained broadcaster. At any rate, it had been enough. The aliens were staying at the Madison.

He must be careful now. He was out of the less populated section of the city, moving toward the stores along L Street. At any moment, someone was liable to spot his golden bulk no matter how black these shadows.

A delivery truck, its tailgate shadowed by a dangling curtain, passed him slowly. His eyes scanned that curtain: there must be a space behind it for him to hide. He darted after it, leaped; he landed easily for all his titantic bulk, a hand on the car roof to break his landing.

The driver felt nothing. He must be on his way home, or perhaps he was to make one or two final deliveries. There were two objects still inside the truck. His hands felt of them, knew them in a way he did not understand, for a small pump and equipment for inserting a well-point. The man in this truck was—was—yes! A plumber.

The Un-human thought. No plumber would be going to a hotel this time of night. More likely, he would be heading home. He crouched in the carry-space of the

truck, peering out past the leather curtain. His eyes not understand the street signs, he had no idea of where the truck was going.

But there were more people on the street here. And where there were people, there would he find hotels. And hopefully, the Madison.

The truck was moving down Rhode Island Avenue. The Un-human scanned the nearby buildings. For a man of his agility, those building faces presented no special problem; he could climb them all.

But he might be far from the hotel.

The truck turned into Georgia Avenue. There were shops all around this section, the neon lights seemed to blaze out in hands of green and reds and blues. The Un-human made a protesting sound in his throat. He would rather by far be in the cool hills, but this was a task he must do.

Half an hour later, the truck pulled into a driveway somewhere in the Washington suburbs. The driver got out and went into a house. The Un-human sat there, puzzling. The magnitude of this city frightened him, perhaps because he was more wild animal than man.

It had been a fool's errand, this try for those aliens. He moved angrily in frustration, and a stab of pain went through his wounded arm. It might be better for him to run back into the hills, recover from his wounds, and then try to destroy the aliens.

But that might take too long.

The aliens would have made Earth their own by that time.

CHAPTER NINE

I drove through the cloudy day in my rented red Thunderbird. I made good time along U.S. Highway 83. I had my travel plan laid out inside my head: I would swing onto 22 at Harrisburg, going west and north. From Bellefonte, I was on my own.

I was heading into the Pennsylvania wilds, so to speak, into the hills in which the Bionics Research Institute was nestled, where the Un-human made its home. I was dressed for cold weather, in plaid wool slacks and flannel blouse, with a matching wool jacket by Valentino to keep up my girlish spirits.

The Belgian Bulldog was in my Marlen shoulder bag.

Valley Rill was a good drive away, but I was enjoying myself. It was not often on a case that I got to drive like this through lovely country sprinkled with the golds and reds of autumn. Here and there tiny towns were nestled in charming valleys, with an occasional farmhouse standing out stark against the brown grasses, or a white church steeple rising skyward.

I pulled into Valley Rill about three in the afternoon. I still had some clothes at Rhea Parker's apartment, but I would not bother with them. While it was still light, I wanted to get up on Mountain Road, park somewhere, and trek off into the woods.

When I braked the car to a stop on a little patch of grass just off the road, the late afternoon sun broke

through the clouds. The sky was reddening to the west. I took it as a good omen.

I slung a knapsack filled with food and a first aid kit over my shoulder. The Un-human had been wounded; I might have to patch him up. The knapsack was heavy, weighed me down more than I liked. But I'd been in worse spots than this in my L.U.S.T. career. I told myself I would make do.

I hunted until the shadows were long and dusk lay over all these high hills, but I finally found it. Its curtains and beige windowframes looked real good to me. I had dressed warmly, but the winds were damn cold this evening. There was no sign of occupancy so I just put a hand on the doorknob, turned it and walked inside the single big room.

The Un-human lay stretched out on the floor. I gave a little cry, slipped off the knapsack and shoulder bag, and ran to him. He had been shot in the arm and in the upper back. The strain of getting back to this cabin from Washington, plus the drain made on his body by those wounds, had been too much for him.

I lit a fire in the fireplace. I boiled water. I got out clean clothes and washed his wounds very carefully. I put medicine on them, I made him as comfortable on the floor as I could, since he was beyond moving. His seven-plus-foot body must have weighed in the neighborhood of six hundred pounds, and it was all bone and hard muscle.

I made soup in an iron pot, good chicken soup with chunks of meat thrown in with vegetables. Actually, I guess it was a stew. But it was hot and nutritious, and after I filled myself to bursting with it, I got down on the floor beside the Un-human and cradled his head in my left arm.

I spoon-fed him. His eyes were grateful.

"Eve," he managed to get out.

"Sssssh, don't talk. You hear me? Understand me?"

He nodded his head.

I said, "You and I are going to have a talk, with me doing the talking. You just nod your head, or shake it."

I fed him first, before I started asking questions. I made him get up and put his big bulk on a pile of blankets I unearthed in a little closet; he would never have fitted in any of the bunks.

I sat down on a stool near him and began.

"Were those the Drann who landed in the silvery spaceship?"

He nodded eagerly.

"And you claim they're not up to any good?"

He nodded again.

"You wanted to kill them?"

He made motions with his hands for a time, gesturing at me and shaking his head. Then he indicated his own golden body, and looked at me with expectant eyes.

"They aren't humans? They don't have human bodies?"

Again that head nod.

"They're like you—no. No, not that. But—they're different from human beings. Alien? Very strange? Is that it? Yes. And you say they want to take over the Earth?"

I was getting nods all the time as I felt my way along with the queries. The Drann were from a far-off planet called Andoth, all right. They told the truth about that. But what they had not told us was that Andoth was a planet with a population problem, same as Earth. Only the Andothalans were doing something about it.

They were a far older race than man, they had been in this Universe a long, long time. They had spread out their colonies to another planet in their star-sun system, but even two planets could not hold them all. And now they wanted in, on Earth.

They possessed science far beyond our own. They

could not exist comfortably on Earth with its present atmosphere. They intended to change that atmosphere. The aliens in the silver box would do that, it had a crew of workers inside the spaceship busily engaged now in sending out certain gases they needed for their proper breathing as Andothalans. Those gases would kill human beings.

When they changed the molecular structure of their bodies to resemble human beings, they could breathe all right, but it took a tremendous strain to maintain that humanoid appearance. All right for their brief appearance as humans, but not nearly good enough for a regular occupation of the planet.

And so they were getting ready to kill off the people of Earth via the vast silver-box spaceship, that was emitting its steady gas flow. A cold chill went racing up and down my spine when I heard that. Unless The General acted fast, the three aliens residing at the Madison in Washington, D.C., would have accomplished their main objective before they were even suspect, except by the Un-human and me.

One thing troubled me. "How did you learn all this?" I asked him.

He shook his head, a look of puzzlement on his features. He could not talk very well, he could pronounce simple words like Eve or Ken, but anything more than that seemed beyond his capacities. It was as if he were playing a perpetual game of charades when he tried to make himself understood.

Half a dozen times he opened his mouth as if trying to say something, but its pronunciation eluded him. I tried to play guessing games, asking if Pamela Frost had told him, if he had found papers or something outlining the Andothalan's plans. He went on shaking his head.

My Movado chronometer told me it was well past midnight. My body had known the time all along. It

was damn tired. I stood up, stretching and yawning. From his crude bed on the floor the Un-human watched me with his grey eyes.

I said, "Good night, I'm going to sleep."

Without any more ado, I slipped out of my burgundy-wool-and-plaid jersey, revealing my upper torso in a fine batiste blouse with ruffles at collar and sleeves. I moved toward the fireplace, removing the blouse. I bent and lifted logs, putting them on the flames. It was going to be a cold night, here in these mountain woods. I wanted to be comfortable.

I had on my black lace brassiere out of which my somewhat generous breasts bulged as I bent to run my black-and-white plaid slacks down off my hips and legs. This left me in black lace bikini pants and my fleece-lined Stuart Brooks Icelandic boots.

I kicked off the boots and reached behind me to unfasten my bra. It came loose and my breasts plopped out, pale and firm, to shake gelatinously as I stood with my back to the flames, getting toasty. My eyes fell on the Un-human.

His grey eyes were goggling at me. And a very special part of him was extremely large and wildly excited. "Oh!" I said. I'd been thinking of him as an animal, like a pet dog.

"Sorry about that," I muttered, running across the room for my tunic pyjamas of warm flannel in a leopardskin design. I bent over to slide down my bikini panties and the Un-human moaned.

I recognized the sex hunger in that moan. I felt sorry for the beast-man, but I snuggled my nude curves inside the flannel pyjamas as fast as I could drag the pants up my legs and wriggle into the tunic. I tied the bow at the throat, then turned to him.

"I wish I could help you," I whispered.

His grey eyes pleaded. He was a human being, those eyes told me. It was not his fault that Adrian Trent and

Rhea Parker had changed his human body to this hairy, golden frame. His *peos* pleaded, too. My stare could not evade it; I was female enough to wonder how it would look. After all, he wasn't a man any more.

Oh, yeah? He was more man than I'd ever seen.

I fought down the rising concupiscence in my feminine flesh. I dove for the bunk and dragged the blankets up over me. I told myself to be more careful in the future. The vision of his very human phallus—there was no hair there—danced in my head.

I squeezed my eyes shut. I was going to be a good girl for once in my life. Balling the Un-human was no part of my job. I heard my heart thumping, I knew my pulsebeat was up, and my female parts were telling me it might be nice to go over there where the Un-human lay and do what I could to ease his tension.

Finally, I fell asleep.

I dreamed, natch. The Un-human was racing through the woods like an express train. He was carrying me, but I was not slung over his shoulder. I rode in front of him, bouncing up and down on his gigantic manhood. I was dying with excitement, nothing I had ever known had felt like this. My legs and my arms were wrapped about his golden body, and I wriggled and jerked at his every step.

Hunters were firing at him, I was screaming for them to go away. If one of those bullets hit my beast-man and killed him, this out-of-the-world pleasure would come to an end. Meanwhile, I rode up and down, posting as if on horseback.

I woke up drenched in sweat and other moistures.

It was near dawn. A pale light was filtering in through the curtained windows. In its light I saw the Un-human sleeping quietly under the blankets I had thrown over him. I studied his not unhandsome face, seeing the humanity in it, yet also that beast-part which had changed his appearance so drastically.

Too early to get up. I rolled over, pulled the blankets closer about me and drifted back to sleep again. This time there were no dreams.

I woke at ten. The Un-human was muttering to himself, turning slightly on the crude bed I'd made for him, babbling gutturally. There was an attitude about him that I did not like. I raised up on an elbow, intent.

Delirium!

I got out of the bunk fast and ran to him. My palm on his forehead felt the fever in his great body. I looked around the cabin helplessly. I know a little first aid, we L.U.S.T. agents are taught it; but my knowledge was far too little to help him.

I looked at his wounds, folding back the bandages. The flesh had an unclean look. They were festering, I told myself weakly. I had to get him to a doctor, and that meant turning him over to the law.

For the police would put him behind steel bars that even his great strength would be unable to bend or break, and there he would stay a prisoner until the Andothalans poisoned the atmosphere. Then he would die like the rest of us.

There had to be a way!

I made a platter of scrambled eggs and some bacon that had been in the knapsack and I ate them and drank the coffee perking merrily over the red-hot firewood amid the dancing blue flames. The Un-human would not eat but only tossed and turned restlessly in his delirium. I thought as I ate, and when I was done, I knew what I had to do.

The Un-human must go to the Institute.

Doctors and nurses would be there to care for him, and I could call The General and tell him what the beast-man had told me. The General could call off the police.

I tore up two of the blankets and made a broad band to fit over my forehead and longer strips to fit about my

shoulders and under my armpits. To these I tied the blankets in which the Un-human was wrapped.

The travois was very crude, but after I had put it on, and dragged the beast-man across the floor and out of the cabin, I knew it would work. It was very slow going; I was dragging six hundred pounds of dead weight along, and I very definitely do not possess the build of a Russian girl shot-putter. The going was all downhill, or I never would have made it. I was exhausted long before we reached the road.

So I sat on a rock and wept.

About two hours later Joe Morton found us. He came creeping between the trees so that I wasn't really sure who it was until he finally stepped out into full view. He had his ten-gauger in a hand, and was ready to use it.

"Save your ammo," I told him. "He's dead."

His face fell a mile. He put the shotgun down and said a few cuss words. I grinned at him, and he flushed, bit a lip and then smiled ruefully. "I coulda used the money," he admitted.

My cue to fumble in my shoulder bag and yanked out a handful of bills. "Here, take these. Oh, go on, I'll chalk them up to expenses."

"Didn't earn it. I couldn't."

"Then earn it. Help me get this body into my car." When he got a suspicious look on his face, I added, "The Institute wants to do an autopsy on him. They think they'll learn what went wrong."

Morton scratched his head and allowed that he might be able to give me a hand, especially for all that money. So he and I started to drag the travois down the slope. I crossed my fingers, hoping that the Un-human wouldn't come out of his fever-induced coma.

Fortunately, the beast-man was out cold.

We got him to my car. I opened the trunk and we shoved most of his golden bulk inside. It seemed to my

untrained eyes that half of him was hanging out, but I didn't have too far to go, and I figured I could make it without his tumbling out.

Joe Morton said when the job was done, "Guess I'd better get back, pass the word along. Lot of boys out hunting for you two."

"Oh? You were lucky to find us."

He grinned, showing tobacco-stained teeth. "Not really. Knew 'bout where I'd seen you before. Came here. That simple."

"Well, my thanks, Joe."

"Any time, lady."

The trunk lid raised high, I drove off toward the Institute.

Half a dozen burly guards and internes came running when I arrived. They got the Un-human up on a table with a small derrick they borrowed from an auto repair shop and trundled him into the compound.

Malcolm Newmann was there to greet me when I followed the wheeled table inside the doors. He hurried me off along the corridor to his office, rubbing his hands together and looking very pleased.

"You've done the country a wonderful service, Miss Drum," he enthused. "Now your job is done, I imagine you'll be wanting to rush off and get back to Washington."

"No. It isn't finished. I want to stay on and make sure Kenneth Frost is out of danger. May I stay and watch the bullets being taken out of him? I have to make my report, you know."

He hesitated slightly, then waved a hand. "But of course. No reason why you can't. We have an operating arena where visiting doctors and our internes may look down and watch the more delicate operations. We train our medical personnel this way, you see, so in case of illnesses among our staff doctors we can always put a finger on a substitute."

He brought me to the arena door and let me in, promising that he would have the beast-man under the operation lights within half an hour. "They'll be making a preliminary study of his wounds right now. I'll go hurry them along."

It took only twenty minutes before they wheeled him in, covered with a sheet. The Un-human was so big they could not lift him onto the regular operating table, so they made do with what they could, shoving the regular table out of the way and substituting the table on which they had brought him into the compound. Much of those twenty minutes, I assumed, had been spent in sterilizing the table.

The team went to work. The anesthesiologist prepared his anesthesia and administered it; then he stationed himself before the machine that fed in the anesthesia and controlled the ventilator. The surgeon and his assistant moved into place while the scrub nurse joined them.

"Scalpel!"

I watched them, but I didn't understand what it was all about. They were getting the bullets out, cutting away the possibly gangrenous skin, cleaning and sterilizing the wounds. It took them twenty minutes, all told.

The orderlies wheeled the beast-man out of the Operating Room. I sighed and stood up, relaxing, realizing how tense I had been for the past half hour. From the floor below, Malcolm Newmann turned and waved a hand at me, smiling upward. He had served as the observer.

I gathered that Kenneth Frost would live. On dancing feet I moved down the corridor toward Dr. Newmann's office. The Un-human would live! he would be well-cared for; my job with him was almost done.

I had to get back to The General now. We had to reach those aliens, arrest or kill them. And, somehow or other, prevent that silver spaceship from giving off

the poisonous gases that would kill every human on Earth. I was so busy thinking about what I was going to do, I forgot what I was doing.

I ran smack into Rhea Parker, so that the two of us came close to falling down. We grabbed whatever we could of each other and began laughing.

"I'm on my way to check him," she gasped. "I wasn't looking."

"Neither was I," I said. "Could I take a peek at him?"

She led the way to a room at the far end of the hall. One of its outside walls was covered with a lot of gadgetry, chrome levers and steel switches, plus gauges and a lot of dials. There was a big picture window there, and through the window, we saw the beast-man covered by a sheet, lying quietly.

"He'll be all right," said Rhea.

"That's a relief, I'm free to admit." My eyes ran over the gauges and the switches. "What's this thing?"

"A variation on the anesthesia machine, only this feeds gases into that room. We do a mock-up of gases known to be on various planets in there and test mice and rats inside. We're trying to find a simple answer to the problem of keeping our astronauts alive if and when we get them to places like Venus, Jupiter, and Mars."

"Kind of ahead of schedule, aren't you?"

"Well, we do all kinds of space research here. That's just one of them. But Ken will be okay in there. It's the only room we have available where that receiving table will fit comfortably.

"He'll be well taken care of, don't worry."

I went back to thank Doctor Newmann, then headed for my Thunderbird. I wanted to call The General and let him know what had happened. I got caught in the traffic of men and women leaving the compound. It was past five, and the day shift was going home.

I had to wait while a dozen cars eased out of the rather crowded parking lot, then I followed them. I drove slowly. There was something nagging me in the back of my head. I let the cars pass me. They went whizzing by and I didn't blame them; if I'd been going home to a hot dinner and a relaxing evening I'd have stepped on the gas, too.

What was in my head that bothered me?

I kept seeing the people leaving the Institute. I guess there would be night personnel to watch over the Un-human, but I wasn't sure. That was it, of course. I was still worried about him.

If he needed medicine in the night, a nurse could bring it. A telephone call would alert the doctors to return and work on him. I was being a silly goop.

Just the same. . . .

The nagging doubt still lingered. I found myself wondering if the news media would be told about his capture. I switched on a station that was just beginning its broadcast. I listened to the latest Arab-Israeli clash; I heard about some new Viet Nam problems; I got briefed on what the police were doing at another university. The broadcaster finished and music came on.

And then it hit me.

Nobody had said a word about the Un-human!

Now this was odd, considering how the news of his escape from the Institute had been given to the radio stations and the newspapers, back at the beginning of all this trouble. Somebody was laying down on the job.

And—hey! How about Pamela Frost? She'd learned about the beast-man just as soon as the radio stations knew about him. Even better, she got the real name of the Un-human.

My feminine intuition was up and pawing the air.

My foot jammed the brake. I glanced in that rear view mirror, saw a clear road behind me, and swung into a U-turn. I drove my foot down hard on the accelerator.

There was a leak at the Institute. There had to be! Somebody in the know had tipped off Pamela Frost about her so-called husband. Why? To get to claim his effects, as his pretended wife? Or to alert her to the fact that the Un-human had to be killed? I recalled the thin metal rod he'd had. He could only have gotten a weapon like that from one of those aliens!

Had Pamela Frost been an alien?

More important, were there any aliens at the Institute now, posing as members of the staff? The same alien who had called Pamela Frost and told her to get into action—fast! My blood ran cold.

The gas chamber where he'd been put! A few careless twists of the dials in that atmosphere-maker, and the beast-man would die from the gases fed into the chamber where he was still under sedation.

The Un-human was the one thing the Andothalans had to fear. They could talk their way around me and The General. The beast-man didn't convince that easily, because he didn't have to confront the higher-ups who run the country.

I was hitting eighty, moving along the mountain road. Right now somebody could be at those dials and switches killing Kenneth Frost. The Thunderbird went into the parking lot on two wheels. I slammed the brakes.

I slid out and ran.

My hand went into my shoulder bag and yanked out the Belgian Bulldog. I hit the glass door with my other hand and raced across the reception room. The girl was not at the desk; it was after visiting hours; only the night emergency staff would be on hand.

I went into the corridors and ran like crazy.

It seemed to take forever, but I finally made it. I turned the corner of the corridor and the special chamber lay before me. There was a man standing at the dials and controls of the machine, turning the dials and

pulling the levers. And a faint white mist was seeping into the chamber room where the Un-human lay.

"Doctor Newmann—hold it!" I yelled.

He whirled and I thought he'd faint. His face went white. His hand clawed at his pocket but he made no further move. His eyes were big as saucers as he looked at me and at my Belgian Bulldog.

"Just hold it, Doctor," I warned.

"Miss Drum, what's the meaning of this?" he choked.

"You know. You're killing Ken Frost."

He laughed, visibly relaxing. "Oh, please! I'm making sure he gets the medication he needs."

"Shut it off until I get another doctor to say the same thing."

His hand came out of the pocket. It held the same thin rod that the beast-man had used to destroy the nuclear power plant.

My finger tightened on the trigger. My bullet caught him smack in the middle of his chest, driving him back and over the machine. Surprise made his eyes grow big. I guess he figured I wouldn't be alarmed, seeing that thin metal rod. I would stand there, ignorant of its use, while he blasted me to powder.

It didn't work out that way.

He sagged, dying. I stared at him in horror, because his human outlines were changing, altering to. . . .

"Good God!" I breathed.

I was looking at a shimmering body, oddly shrunken inside the suit Malcolm Newmann had been wearing. The shimmering stopped and now I found myself staring at a bald head with eyes like marbles at the end of fleshy stalks. A thin covering of hair was all over his face, and his mouth was a small round hole.

I would have given a lot for a camera. I'd have snapped his picture and shoved it under The General's nose as proof that. . . .

I lifted the Bulldog. I fired again and again.

Somebody here ought to have a camera. Feet pounded. A couple of orderlies and guards came running. "Get me a camera," I yelled. "This thing was Doctor Newmann. He's an alien and he was trying to kill Ken Frost."

One of the orderlies sprang to the machine, shut it off. Then he picked up a couple of gas masks hanging beside the door and he and two other men went into the chamber and brought the Un-human out.

By this time Rhea Parker was at my side, explaining that she had stayed to finish an experiment. She looked a little sick when she saw what lay on the floor. She was a big help, though, despite the fact that I was afraid she was going to up-chuck at any moment.

She got me the camera; she told the orderlies to take the alien's body into a cold storage vault.

"Why didn't we find Pamela Frost like this if she was an alien, too?" she wondered as I clued her in on the whole case.

"Probably because Newmann disposed of her body when he found her dead in the car wreckage. She and Newmann must have been working pretty closely, hand in glove stuff. He knew she killed poor Adrian Trent, and that she was going to try and kill you."

I thought a moment, then added, "And me, as well. It must have been a great shock to him to find her dead body inside that smashed-up red Camaro she was driving. He probably disintegrated it with his own rod-gun."

I walked beside the table with the Un-human. It was wheeled to a room where Rhea pumped out any of the lethal gases that might have gotten into his lungs. She fed him good, clean oxygen.

She said, "He's okay. He didn't breathe enough of the stuff to really bother him. Another ten minutes, though. . . ."

Her shoulders shrugged. She turned to me and said, "Come home with me, Eve. I'm off duty now. I only stayed on for that experiment. We can eat and get cosey. . . ."

"Love to, honey. But I've got to call The General and tell him what happened here. I want those negatives developed, too. I'll need those pictures as proof of what Newmann turned into when he died."

Rhea sighed and batted her eyelashes at me. Any other time I might have taken her up on her offer, but I honest to God *did* have to stop that silver spaceship from emitting those poisonous gases.

"You can phone from here," she suggested hopefully.

We went down the hall and into what had been Malcolm Newmann's office. I dialed L.U.S.T. headquarters and was told The General had gone for the day. I dialed his home.

He didn't believe me at first.

So I yelled, "Well, goddamn it to hell! I've got pictures. So there! And the body's in the cold storage vault. How do you like them apples?"

"It's not proof that the aliens are going to poison the atmosphere," he protested, but in a weak voice.

"Then get some pollution experts down to that silver spaceship and see what they learn with their gadgets. If you don't, General—the whole damn world is going kopfluey!"

I hung up on him.

I guess there were tears of frustration in my eyes, because Rhea put an arm about me and whispered her understanding of what I was going through. "Nobody's ever a prophet in his own country, Eve. You and Ken—you're both fighting a lonely battle."

"Yeah, but I can do something he can't."

"Oh? What's that?"

"I can walk into the Madison where those aliens are

staying and pump lead into their humanoid bodies. When the General sees 'em change right under his eyes, maybe he'll change his mind, as well."

"You wouldn't really do that, would you?"

She looked horrified, and I didn't blame her. After all, she was a bionics babe, not a secret agent. She had never killed as I had. She had never been tortured as I had. Hers was an entirely different way of life.

I put my arm around her, hugging her. Her big brown eyes, that had been about to spill over with tears, shone brightly with happiness.

"I knew you were only joking," she whispered.

Something inside me said I was in grim earnest.

CHAPTER TEN

He lay in blackness through which an ebbing pain still stabbed. He remembered the men in the blue suits who had fired at him, hitting his body with their bullets. He did not blame them, curiously enough. They were doing their duty.

In their eyes, he was a shaggy, golden monster.

He thought in the blackness that would not go away. It was as if he lay cradled in dark cotton, swatched in warmth. He was remembering something else. The face of the woman with the gold hair, who had. . .

What had she done?

Yes. She had nursed him back to life, there in the cabin. His memory dwelt on her shapely body in the firelight; he saw again how the flames had tinted her pale skin with moving tints of redness, and how his own body had reacted to the sight of her nakedness.

Perhaps he was not a monster after all. In fact, he was very human. His man-flesh had risen in reaction to her nude body. She had seen the evidence of his passion and she had not covered herself. She had posed there for him with a faint, dreaming smile upon her lips, as though *she* considered the mating act with *him*.

He did not terrify her as he terrified other people.

He would like to see her again in the cabin. He would enjoy folding his arms about her soft body, carrying it to his maleness, sinking her down upon his strength. God! The pleasure of that act, once again!

It had been such a long time, such a long time. Years, many years. The last woman who had known his body was that waitress, the night he had been driving through the rainstorm on his way to the Bionics Research Institute. How long ago had that been? He had been at the Institute for five years now.

Five years! Five years of illness, really, and of being worked on, for the past two, by Adrian Trent and Rhea Parker. God! Five years without a woman. No wonder the sight of Eve standing naked had excited his flesh.

His mind smiled. He was recovering some of his lost humanity. He was no longer all animal, despite his appearance. It was so pleasant to lie there in the warm darkness and remember.

A worry tugged at the strings of his mind.

He should be thinking about something else, not remembering the way the waitress had flirted with him in the diner where he'd stopped to eat fifty miles from Valley Rill. She had been wearing a soiled, white uniform, rumpled and dirty with sweat and food stains. But her uniform lacked a top button. When she bent over her big, pallid breasts had come pushing into the opening. His eyes had stared.

Her voice had grown softer when she talked to him. It was late at night; he was the only customer in the place. She was through work when he was finished eating. It had been an invitation of sorts; at least, that was the way he considered it.

He had put a hand on her hip, casually. She did not push it away; she just smiled down at him and asked if he were going far, and if his wife was waiting for him. When he replied that he had no wife, she began to melt even more.

She was lonely, too, she admitted.

"Why not come home with me?" she asked. "We're both looking for a little human companionship. Let's give a little, each of us."

He offered to buy some liquor and the makings. She undid her apron, stretching to hang it on a peg, making her short skirt rise. His eyes had lingered on her shape-ly leg in the nylon stocking that had a run in it, seeing the stretch of pale thigh above it and the garterclasp. It had been such a long time between women for him even then that his manflesh had bloated in response to that viewing.

The nagging worry touched him, but he put it away. An animal for so long, it was very pleasant to lie there and dream about his human past. He wondered vaguely if his long-buried humanity was surging to the surface, making him forget something—something that was very important—that he had to do. . . .

No matter!

She had primped before the mirror, fluffing her brown hair, her eyes smiling into the mirror at his reflection as he stood just a little behind her. His eyes ran up and down her fleshy body crowded into the rumpled uniform and the anticipation swelled in him, swelling, swelling. . . .

He had come up behind her, pushed his loins into her buttocks that he found soft and ungirdled. She gasped a little, feeling his rigid flesh against her softness.

"Oooooooh, you are lonely, honey," she had whispered.

He had kissed her throat, found it warm, soft, scented with cheap perfume. Kenneth Frost had never known any other kind of woman, really. The Eve who had undressed in the cabin had been different. No cheap perfume for her, no stockings with a run in them. She was something Kenneth Frost had never known.

And walking down the dark street after she had locked the diner, giggling like school kids, the two of them in their late thirties or early forties. He had not

been ashamed; it was almost frighteningly enjoyable with her arm holding his and that solid breast nudging his ribs when she squirmed against him. He had the liquor bottle in a paper bag in the crook of his right arm.

Going up the narrow hallway to her walkup apartment, unable to resist sliding his hand along her shapely leg, up under her skirt to the soft flesh. She had paused and turned and come down two steps to stand with him, her open mouth fastened on his lips and he thought he'd die with the delight of that kiss, and the way her soft thigh was nudging him where, on this night, he was very much a man.

It was so pleasant to think back, to remember.

The worry that lurked in a corner of his head was silent now because he pushed it back and away from him. Whatever it was could wait.

In her apartment, the door closing, her warm body coming against his own, softness of breasts spreading as they mashed to his chest. A wet, wide mouth, scarlet and gaping, taking his lips to it, and her tongue like a snake of Eden, crying out to his soul with its twistings and lickings. His right hand still held the bottle in its paper bag but his left went down to her buttocks, finding them soft and giving.

"Oh God," he breathed when she let him go.

Something in his yearning eyes touched her femininity because her soft, brown eyes filled with tears and she almost blubbered, "Is it that way with you, too?"

Wanting. Needing. Yearning for another human.

As he yearned for Eve, this moment.

He was still a human being. No monster, he. He wanted to throw back the darkness covering him and go out into the world and find that Eve and carry her off with him to a room where he and she could be alone.

As he had been alone with the waitress, laughing and

unbuttoning her uniform with her laughing protests not hindering his shaking fingers, not one little bit. Open the uniform, see her in the black brassiere and the black panties with the imitation lace on them, and the garterbelt under them and. . .

He wanted to weep, so happy he was.

Female flesh, partly hidden, with the tiny hairs of her *mons veneris* visible, pushing out of the pantie legs. He had gone to his knees, he had wrapped her hips in his arms and he had kissed.

The eternal adoration, the male of the female.

She wept a little, squirming, asking, "Will you do that, will you? I'll take a shower—we'll both take a shower. You don't have to rush, honey, do you? I mean, not before tomorrow morning? We can have all night."

He would not have rushed for all the gold in China. He told her so, kissing her soft belly through the panties, with her soft hand holding his head to her middle and the tears oozing from her closed eyes. His hands were sliding up and down the backs of her meaty thighs above her laddered stockings, and he thought he loved her a little more because of those torn nylons.

She was a human like himself, not rich, struggling to make the ends meet, to have enough food in her middle and a comfortable bed on which to lie of nights, with old age yet to come and a grasping for life and the sharing of life with another person, this kneeling man. Of what frail clay, we humans.

Oh, he read her mind so well, since he was a part of it. His illness was in the future but he sensed it now and then, with the pains that made him cry out. Frail clay, the two of them. But seeking something better, something that was so much a part of them—a soul? The knowledge that each was part of a higher wisdom—with only their bodies to tell of that seeking.

That which had been Kenneth Frost smiled.

He had sensed all that philosophic thought that night even while his lips browsed on her soft flesh, but not until this moment did he really understand it. His loneliness was the loneliness of all men and women, really. There is something missing in each one of us, he thought.

Find that which is missing, Kenneth Frost!

He stirred in the blackness, groaning.

No! No, he would not. He wanted to think on the woman, of the sharing of their flesh, their grasping of a moment out of time together, when they were not one alone but—but something else.

She had undressed him and when she saw his arousal she had knelt before him and had taken it in her soft hands and kissed it. He had cried out in shocked delight, no one had ever done that to him. For the instant it seemed she was telling him that they were one, they were part of some Eternal Plan.

He looked down at her plump shoulders, seeing how the brassiere straps indented the pale flesh. His hands caught those straps, pushed down her upper arms. His hands slid around to her front and over her big breasts. His palms held her breasts very gently, his fingers went around and over their solid roundness, touching the stiff brown nipples, bending them and gripping them as the woman moaned.

All this was a part of it, the caress and the kiss. He was male, she was female, and only by a blending of their natures could they both achieve that which they could see but dimly.

His hands lifted her to her feet, he turned her, kissing her bare shoulder, undoing her brassiere, sliding his palms under her breasts as they fell out. Long he stood like that, staring down at those breasts, pressing his need to her buttocks.

"Come with me," she whispered.

She brought him with her into the bathroom, all

white tile with a pink shower curtain, and she had let him slide down her black panties until he could see the dark growth of her pubic hair and the wideness of her pallid hips, and he kissed her again, reverently.

The shower water was warm, pleasant. The soap in their hands was slithery, foaming as she rubbed it over his flesh. He took the soap from her, rubbed her body with it. The shower water had cleansed them as if it washed away everything they had ever been and were to be and left them this night with one another.

Her fingers quivered as they stroked his manhood.

"The bed, the bed," she breathed.

White buttocks twitching, moving before him and drawing him with them out of the bathroom and across a rug toward a bed. Shapely white woman legs, moving with unconscious grace. Slender hips and the soft back looking like rich cream.

I am not worthy, he thought.

"Wait," he said aloud.

She paused, glancing over her shoulder at him, eyebrows arched. His eyes were on her soft buttocks, and he knew the need to kneel and kiss that womanflesh. A touch of masochism? He did not know. It was the need that drove him, the wanting and the hunger, perhaps the need to abase himself. Because of his scrawney build and the hundred and twenty pounds of his five foot three inch frame? Was there a guilt inside him that needed assuagement because he did not consider himself a man?

She thrust her buttocks at his eyes.

He knelt and kissed those soft globes, delighting in the abandonment of pride, the subservience. She made little gurgling sounds above him; apparently she enjoyed these caresses of lips and tongue.

"Enough," she said after a time, and he knew she was right. With her feminine wisdom she had known it was time for the burying of the male blade within the

female sheath that yearned, in its own turn, to be filled.

Upward she drew him to the bed, and there she sprawled her nakedness in open-thighed invitation and he gave a soft cry and fell upon her. Deep he plunged, deep, deep in this symbolized returning to the womb. He gasped as the pleasure caught him, lifted the soul of him swirling up, up, up. His body pounded at her body, his flesh slithered and swooped; the carnal hawk feeding on its natural prey.

Long he feasted, long.

And when he fell away she was screaming out her delight in him as a man, holding him with her somewhat fleshy arms and kissing his face adoringly. He had lain naked beside her on the bed with the shades pulled down and the dim light—pink it was, he recalled—shedding itself on their nakedness as if in blessing.

Now it was her turn, as the submissive female, the conquered flesh striving to rouse up the carnal hawk to be conquered once again. Her lips kissed his hairless chest, slid down his belly. To his maleness her mouth went, kissing in worship.

And she roused him again. A phoenix in happyland.

She swung on him, knelt over his recumbent body and his standing flesh, taking him with a low cry of delight, and he lay there watching her big breasts flop and shake and she was everything he had ever wanted in all his life. Even as the pleasure swelled him, he thought wryly what small and insignificant goals he had set for himself, for this man who was Kenneth Frost.

All night long, the pleasure.

Never before like that; never since.

Why didn't I ever go back? Why?

She was there, she had told him she would always wait for him. She would go with him; she did not want to marry him, just to be there when the mood for loving came upon his flesh. It was all she asked, and he had denied her that crumb of carnality.

Because he was sick, inside his small body?

Yes. He knew it, even then, but he had put it out of his mind, just as he was putting something else out of his mind, the worry.

The Un-human washed his mind of thought as he had washed his body and the body of the waitress on that long-ago night. He let the worry come flooding in, and then he knew.

The Drann. . . .

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The General swore softly.

"You've got to be kidding, Eve. Walk into the Madison hotel suite where Suradar Selm and those others are staying and shoot them? Oh my God! What's got into you?"

"They're poisoning the atmosphere."

"Hogrot!"

"Is anybody testing the air around that spaceship?"

"Goddamnit it! It would be a breach of hospitality!"

"Hospitality! What kind of hospitality is demanded of you when your guest is killing you? That's what I want to know."

"You don't have one single concrete bit of proof. Everything you've told me is sheer, unadulterated speculation! Your feminine instinct. Bah!"

"What about those photographs?" I screamed.

He picked them up and flipped through them, scowling blackly all the while. "So their normal bodies are different than ours, that's all these prove. I guess so they wouldn't offend us, they put on humanoid bodies in some way.

"But this doesn't mean they're out to poison the air.

"I can't go off half-cocked, girl. I run a responsible department. If I did what you want, I might find myself facing a murder charge right along with you. No, no. I can't do it."

"Test the air around the spaceship! It's all I'm asking!"

He glowered at me, his shaggy brows drawn together. With his muscular bulk crammed inside his office chair, the chief looked like a bull about to charge and gore. I had never faced up to The General before like this, I'd always accepted his pronouncement as divine writ. But now I was fighting for my own life and for that of every man, woman and child on this planet Earth—and I was God damned if I was going to quit.

"Get out of here," he growled.

"The hell I will," I yelled back.

"You're fired," he screeched.

"You can't fire me. Not without a hearing. And I tell you that there won't be any hearing because we'll all be dead by the time the League bigwigs get around to holding one."

He reached for a cigar, then threw it back into the humidor on his desk. "Eve, I respect you. You have a fine record as an agent. But you've gone off the deep end this time."

"What are you afraid of? If I'm wrong—you can cashier me. You'll have proof enough to lay before the board of inquiry! But if I'm right . . ."

He seethed with fury. Thick, stubby fingers drummed a tattoo on his glass desktop as his eyes glowered at me. The wheels were turning inside his head; I could practically see them whirling. He was a smart man, The General, not hidebound by rules or by tradition. While he was no liberal, he was a free-thinker.

For more than a full minute our eyes held together, mine with challenge in them, his with baffled rage, deep thought, and a weighing of actions pro and con. Finally, he slapped the desktop with the flat of his palm.

"All right, you made your point. Now prove it."

I could have leaned over the desk and kissed him.

But even Oh Oh Sex doesn't kiss The General. I satisfied myself with a loud, "Whoopee! Chief, you won't be sorry."

"I hope not!"

"I'll need gadgets, and somebody to operate them. I want to test the air all around that spaceship."

He reached for the intercom, flipped a switch. "Miss Hogsworth, put me through to the city's department of Air Pollution Control."

Cupping a hand over the receiver, he snapped, "Those boys will know what you want—they do it every day. They hunt for everything from burning leaves to smokey chimneys every day of every year. The issue about a thousand summonses a year, too, for illegally polluting the atmosphere."

His hand went away as he jerked the phone to his mouth. "Get me Smedbury." There was a pause, then, "Smed? One of my agents wants to make some atmosphere tests. In a hurry. Yes, yes. It's damned important. Give me your best man. All right, all right, I'll make out a request in triplicate—but let your man and my girl get together in this without any more red tape."

"No, no. I'll explain it to you over a coffee mug one of these days. Just trust me, Smed."

He hung up. "There'll be a man and a truck at the back door in an hour. Be there." He studied me a few moments longer. "I hope you're wrong, for all our sakes, Eve. If you're right—well! God help us all. Now get the hell out of here!"

I blew him a kiss instead of leaning over the desk. His craggy face broke into a grim smile and his shoulders hunched forward, then relaxed. I closed the door gently behind me.

The man was waiting in the truck when I marched out the rear door and into the parking lot of the building that L.U.S.T. shares with certain other governmental agencies in the Capitol. He reached over, opened the

door, and glanced down at my nyloned legs revealed by the micro-skirt I was wearing.

"Where away, love?"

"The airport, honey."

He was a young man, a little to my surprise. I'd expected a balding fiftyish scientist. He drove with one eye on the traffic, the other on my gams. I let him look. Being like any other female, I enjoy being admired.

He asked, finally, "What's at the airport?"

"The spaceship from Andoth."

His eyebrows rose. "Oh? And what's that got to do with us?"

I told him what I suspected in as short a time as I could. He got a bit excited, maybe because I sounded more convincing to him than I had to The General.

"Jeez! No kidding! It's like a movie, sort of. Well, it won't take me long to find out, that's for sure."

We pulled across the tarmac as near the spaceship as I dared to go. It was plenty close enough for his purposes, my young scientist friend assured me. He added gratuitously, "And call me Ted. Ted White's the full name."

He busied himself with what looked like a small white box on legs with a pointed top. It resembled a trash can, actually, but instead of the swinging doors, the whole lid rose up to disclose testing apparatus inside it. He set up the air-sampling equipment outside the truck, hidden from view of the spaceship by the truck itself.

He went to work. I sat on one of the small folding chairs I brought from inside the truck, watching him. He kept up a running commentary as he worked.

"Air pollution's a big business these days. Give work to a lot of people, including me. But it's very important. Very. You know much about it?" When I confessed my abysmal ignorance, he beamed.

"Kills, it does. You know that in 1952 the city of

London had a killing fog hit it? Read about it in the old newspapers. Killed four thousand people more than the number who usually die in the time it hung around the city. Respiratory diseases, heart failure, pneumonia, bronchitis, that sort of thing.

"Same thing in Donora, Pennsylvania few years before that. A thermal inversion—where the cool air is at ground level and can't rise because there's a layer of warm air above it—kept the pollutants at breathing height. Lot of industries in that region. Kept pouring sulfur gases into the air, day after day, with no place for them to go except into peoples' lungs. Six thousand people taken sick—more than twenty died. All from that damned polluted air."

His eyes glanced away from his machine toward my legs, admiring their shapeliness. He grinned, "Did you know that sulfur dioxide which is given off by lots of industrial factories and is found in our city smog—can put runs in your nylon stockings? Fact. Those same sulfur gases corrode metal and eat away the stone buildings. You can imagine what they do to the inside of your lungs."

"Stop," I said weakly.

He grinned at me, having a great time telling me what he knew. I didn't blame him, he hadn't caused the pollution, he was fighting it. Maybe he just wanted me to know what an important guy he was.

"Reason you hear so much about the smog around Los Angeles is there's a high incidence of thermal inversion there. No place for the clean air to come in and sweep the smog away."

"Isn't there any answer?" I asked feebly.

"Sure is. Spend money. Make car engines carry blow-by recyclers, plus after burners. What the recycler does is carry the unused fuel from the crankcase back through—hold it!"

He bent over his gadgets and froze into position with

his face thrust over the recording unit. From time to time he made grunts and gurgles, which were his reactions to what he was learning. I squirmed back and forth on my rump, wanting to know whether I'd brought him out on a wild goose chase.

"Well? How about it?" I called.

His left hand waved me to silence.

He made notes on a pad of paper; he looked thoughtful and vaguely concerned. I expected to fall over dead in about two minutes from the poison gas the spaceship was pouring into our air, to judge by his expression.

He snapped the pad shut and scowled at me. He didn't say anything, just glared as if this was all my own fault. He fiddled around his equipment and brought out a big silver rubber balloon, collapsed.

He muttered, "I've got to take air samples."

The balloon filled up. He clamped shut its opening and put the balloon very carefully inside the truck. Then he came around to sit down in another folding chair right in front of me. He looked up my micro-skirt for a few seconds, then gave a great big sigh.

"You've brought me out on a wild goose chase, honey."

I leaned forward, uncrossing my legs. I must have spread them a little wider than usual in my excitement because his eyes got kind of bulgy.

"You're putting me on," I yelled.

His glance told me he'd love to, but he only shook his head. "Nope. Sorry. This is the result of my findings:

"First of all let me say we have no therma inversion present. This means a lot. There's a cool autumn wind sweeping through the city right now that's blowing away a lot of the pollution. So, now for my report.

"Sulfur gases, low. Carbon monoxide about normal, everything considered. Hydrocarbons more than these,

but that's to be expected. Nitrogen dioxides, smaller even than the sulfur gases."

"Great," I said dully. "Now tell me what it means."

He grinned. "No trace of any poison gas at all. Absolutely none. What I've tried to put into basic English for you is the same sort of report my colleagues are getting at the test points where they're stationed this morning. I could have stayed home and given you this reading."

I slumped. I guess I looked pretty glum because his face showed concern. "You ought to be glad," he muttered defensively.

"But this means . . ."

It meant an end to everything! The Un-human was a liar or a madman, one or the other. The Andothalans were friendly space neighbors, come to pay us a visit. They had no more intention of poisoning Earth's atmosphere than I did when I lighted up a cigarette.

I sagged all over.

The General could nail my girl-girl hide to the wall. I might be out of L.U.S.T. for life. Eve Drum had staked everything on the Un-human and the Un-human had failed her. I was finished, washed up as a secret agent.

"You don't look very happy," Ted murmured.

"Happy! How can I be happy?"

Then it came to me. I was being selfish. The safety of the billion people on Earth was assured. Losing my job was a small price to pay for that. I pushed my lips into a smile and slapped my palms on my thighs.

"You're right, Ted," I told him. "I should be happy. There was nothing to be alarmed about. Those aliens are good people. Earth is safe. Yeah, I guess I am happy."

I stood up.

"I'll drop you off at your office."

"No, I'm going home. Or what's home to me in Washington, the Mayflower Hotel. I'm tired. Beat."

He looked sympathetic, which was something I suppose. I gave him a hand with his gadgetry, helping him get it all inside the truck. I climbed wearily into the front seat with him. Honest, I wanted to bawl.

Sure, sure. I was glad the people were safe, but it was a bad let-down. I'd banked so much on the Un-human. I'd figured he was right about The Drann. Instead, he was turning out to be some kind of nut.

I got out at Connecticut Avenue and DeSales Street. I blew Ted a kiss and walked into the lobby of the Mayflower. I got my room key and went upstairs.

My clothes made a trail from the door to the bathroom behind me as I paraded through the room. Naked, I stepped into the shower and turned on the taps. I stayed there with the water beating down on me, washing the grime from my body and the hot, scalding tears from my eyes. Goddamn! I had liked the Un-human. But I had to admit the truth. He was a real goof-ball.

The towel dried me as I moved it slowly around my damp skin, standing in my bare feet on the towel mat. The tiredness was oozing out of me, but some shut-eye would be in order. I put on a reasonably new mini-nightie of nylon tricot in a floral print and stared at myself in the door-mirror.

I looked cute and cuddley, all but my face. It was tired, and even the Warner nightgown didn't seem to help. I turned and ran for the bed.

I lifted off the telephone and laid it on the night table. I didn't want The General yowling his I-told-you-sos in my pearly ears while I was in the middle of a dream. Then I dropped my head into the foam-rubber pillow and slept.

And slept. And slept. . . .

When I woke, it was dark outside the hotel. I

stretched and wriggled around between the sheets, enjoying this luxury. I remembered the air test and what it meant. I wilted slightly, but not too much. The sleep had been good for me.

My Seth Thomas traveling clock told me it was twenty minutes past four in the morning. I'd been asleep for more than fourteen hours! And my stomach was informing me it was starving to death.

I turned over and went back to sleep.

A knocking on the door woke me the second time. I listened to it, telling myself it was the maid to clean the room and make the bed. One eye opened and looked at the clock. Ten minutes past ten. Time to get up, anyhow.

I stumbled to the door, opened it a crack and said, "Come on in. You can work while I get dressed." I turned and headed for the closet.

The door opened and shut. Somebody came in and closed the door. Then that somebody cleared a throat, and a mental alarm went off inside me. No maid I'd ever known had that deep male growl when she cleared her windpipes. I threw a glance over my shoulder.

Ted White was standing with his back to the door, grinning at me. His eyes were all over me. I glanced down at myself, realizing that the mini-nightie did damn little to hide the Drum bod from those hungry eyes.

"Hey," I said weakly.

"You told me to come in," he said defensively.

"Yeah, I did, didn't I? Well, what's on your mind—as if I didn't know? No! Don't tell me. I just woke up."

I went into the closet. I wriggled out of the nightie. Teddy boy said something I didn't quite get, what with the door practically shut and all.

The door opened and he stood there, grinning at me.

I was stark, staring naked. The mirror across the room showed me from the neck down, which was

where he was looking anyhow, at my big, white breasts with their rigid, brown nipples and my narrow waist with the dimpled bellybutton and the blonde boskage of my pubic forest, plus my nicely curved thighs and calves.

He looked so stunned, I couldn't be mad.

"You were saying?" I asked, playing it cool.

"Didn't you hear me?"

"No, I didn't, which you damn well know because you wouldn't have come over here and opened the closet door, otherwise. Well, take a good look."

I turned sideways, holding my arms over my head. I swung around and let him see me from the rear. Then I completed the circle and faced him again.

"What'll your wife say?" I wondered.

"Not married."

"You should be," I murmured, glancing down at his loins where a part of him was of a piece with the rest—very pushy. I stared at him and he stared at me, until I, for one, got tired of our mutual admiration society.

"Well, what was it?" I asked.

"What was what?"

"Come on, come on, you've had enough time to memorize my every pore. What did you come here for?"

"Oh, that."

He was a sly one. I give him credit. He parried my every query, which gave him more time to eat me with his bulging eyeballs. But I guess even he figured he might be overdoing it, so he let go with a big sigh.

"The balloon," he said.

I began to laugh, leaning against the door jamb and letting the emotions bottled up inside me bubble out into almost hysterical laughter. When I could, I fumbled for a dressing gown and slithered into it.

"Maybe I'll get some sense out of you now."

He looked terribly disappointed. I felt sorry for him,

not being married and all and spending most of his days with those air pollution gadgets. So I didn't button the wrapper completely, I let it hang open so he could see teasing little glimpses of my pink skin. I am a terrible tease at times; but then, I'm a woman. I think with my emotions.

I gave him a little pat where it counted as I walked past him. He jumped a foot. I sat myself down on the edge of the bed and dialed room service. My eyes swivelled at him and my eyebrows rose.

"Coffee? Ham and eggs?"

He nodded dumbly, pulling a chair around so he could see my bare legs where the wrapper didn't cover them. He was a voyeur, this lad. I gave room service our orders, then hung up.

"What about the balloon?" I asked.

"I filled it with air. Airport air."

Damned if I would, I told myself. No more questions. Let him tell the story his own way. I dimpled a smile at him and swung my right leg back and forth, leaning forward a little so my breasts pushed their weights into the thin nylon of the black wrapper.

"I wanted to make more tests. I was getting a funny reading at the airport. I needed more time and better equipment to test the air more fully."

I sat up straight, feeling my left breast slide out and stare at my visitor while he stared back at it, licking his lips. Ted White was going to tell me something damned important, I realized suddenly. I urged, "Go on, go on!"

"Well, that reading was the tip-off, actually. I could and did tell you how many sulfur gases and the rest were in the atmosphere but—there was a kind of blank space in my readings that should have been filled by—something.

"I'm not telling this very well, maybe because I don't understand it fully myself. Let me put it this way: the

spaceship was giving off a kind of gas that just never registered on the air pollution equipment I had in the truck. But I got a sample of it in the balloon."

"And?"

"I worked all night long on it. I knew I was on the verge of something big; I just didn't know what. Oh, it took me a long time to isolate the unknown gas. I don't want to make it sound too easy. I worked damn hard."

"Dear boy," I whispered.

He flushed a little, thinking I was making fun of him. "Once I had the thing isolated, I could make tests on it. You know, I guess, how helium was discovered, don't you? Scientists made a spectroscopic reading of it on the sun before it was even guessed at on earth. Once they knew it existed, they were able to find it.

"My work was a little like that. I analyzed it. I used it on some mice we keep on hand to test for air pollution. The mice died."

My hands were clenched into fists. "I was right," I breathed. "The Un-human was right. Those aliens are out to take over our world."

He nodded. "Looks that way. I called The General up about four o'clock this morning. Got him out of bed to tell what I'd done."

"He was speechless," I guessed.

"The hell he was! I never heard a man swear like that. He told me to meet him at his office inside an hour. When I got there, everybody who worked for him was on the job."

My eyeballs got big. "Everybody? At five in the morning?"

He nodded triumphantly. "He called somebody named Clarissa Hogsworth and told her to contact all his people. He moves fast when he moves, doesn't he?"

I nodded dazedly. "Like a goosed lightning bolt, honey. And then he sent you over here."

"You didn't answer your phone. He felt you ought to

know. What were his exact words? Oh, yeah. 'Tell little hotpants she was right again, goddamn it!' Is that right, Eve?"

I eyed him suspiciously, knowing what was coming. "Is what right?" I asked, daring him to say it.

"About the . . ."

Room Service rapped on the door.

A waiter brought in a wheeled cart with our plates of ham and eggs, toast and two pots of steaming hot coffee. Ted slipped him a bill or two as a tip.

Before I lifted the lid off my breakfast, I asked, "What are they doing about the spaceship?"

"They've surrounded it with a couple of Army Corps and some tanks. Nobody gets in or out until the President himself decides what to do."

"What about me?"

"You go visit the aliens, keep them in their room. If you have to—The General said you'd know what to do."

I choked on a mouthful of scrambled eggs. "Now?" I yelped.

"Eat, eat," he told me, filling his mouth with food.

So we ate, stuffing ourselves until Ted leaned back and lit a cigarette. He had himself a kind of second breakfast, feasting on my wrapper-concealed bod. While I enjoyed his admiration, it didn't do a thing for me. I got to my feet and yawned, stretching. The wrapper fell open.

"Better get to work," I said.

"Couldn't we wait a couple of hours?" he asked plaintively.

His tongue was all but hanging out. I wriggled a little, teasing him. My breasts bobbed all over the place,

"Sorry, Ted. Duty calls. I'll get dressed in that closet so you can finish your cigarette in peace."

"Peace," he mumbled, in something like a growl.

I would have to do something about this boy, after my job was done. He really was suffering quite a bit on my account. I just couldn't help it, as I walked across the room toward the closet. I let the wrapper sort of drift off me and fall to the wall-to-wall carpeting. I finished the rest of my walk with only my bed-slippers on me.

"Wait," Ted yowled, getting out of his chair.

Naturally, I ran into the closet and shut the door, locking it. There was a fancy electric light inside the closet. I turned it on and started getting dressed. Ted was pacing up and down outside the closet door, making grumbly sounds.

When I came out in a mini-skirt creation of Luba, furnished with a see-in blouse and visible bra, Ted White rolled his eyes. "I can't look at you any more; I'm dying," he blurted, and turned his back.

"What a sweet compliment," I giggled and made up my mouth before the bureau mirror where I could watch him. The boy seemed about to explode.

I wiped the sex from his mind by letting him see me slide the Belgian Bulldog into my handbag. His eyes got round and he looked at me with new respect.

"Let's go," I said, snatching up a Mallory Afghanistan jacket with the fur lining. I slid arms into it on the way to the door. Ted ran ahead of me and opened it.

"Where to?" he asked in the corridor.

"The Madison, honey. Where the aliens are."

He flagged down a taxi along Connecticut Avenue. The Madison was well within walking range, but I guess Ted White wanted a moment or two to talk to me. I slid in, he came in after me, and the taxi moved into traffic along M Street with gentle smoothness.

"You really aren't going to use that gun, are you?"

I stared at him very innocently. "Of course I am—if I have to. Now don't you fret, honey. Mamma's used to this sort of thing."

My big, baby blues got down inside him because he didn't say anything, he just sort of stared back at me in that hungry-infant way he had. His hand covered mine, squeezing it.

"Have you ever really killed anybody?" he breathed.

"Many times, darling. I'm a L.U.S.T. agent, you know."

The taxi slowed to a stop. "Why don't you stay here, wait for me?" I asked. "I won't be long."

"Not on your life! I'm going to see this through."

He came hopping out of the taxi, shoving a bill at the driver, then took my arm as a boy friend might and ushered me into the ornate lobby of the Madison. We strolled across the lobby toward the elevators.

The aliens were in one of the penthouse suites, courtesy of the American taxpayers. The operator never gave us a glance but took us right up. Of course, I had to show my L.U.S.T. credentials, which I did.

There were two city cops on guard outside the door. I flashed my credentials on them. I gathered that somebody had briefed them that I was coming, because one of them said, "That's all right, Miss Drum. You go right on in."

The door knob turned in my hands.

The suite was lavishly furnished, with a dark blue wall-to-wall carpet on the floor and expensive blue and white sofa and chairs scattered here and there. One of the aliens, it was the lady known as Grethlin Fort, if I remembered correctly, was standing at the window staring out over the city.

She turned as we came in, and her pretty face appeared to snarl at us for a moment. She smoothed it out; she made herself smile as she turned to face us.

"Suradar Selm isn't receiving visitors," she snapped.

"I know, I know," I told her. "I'm just here to make sure nobody comes in and nobody goes out."

Her face showed surprise. "But we are visitors from another planet. We can go where we want."

The door into the next room opened. The one named Drindon Holm came bursting in on us, crying out, "The commander has received a telepathic call from . . ."

He broke off, sliding to a halt. He was more honest than Grethlin Fort. His face was dark with anger at sight of us.

"What are you two doing here? Go away," he yelled.

"No can do, Charley. I'm here to stay—and so are you."

Drindon Holm put his hand on a narrow leather sheath that held, I was sure, one of those thin, metal rods such as the Un-human had carried. I slipped my hand inside the Gucci bag that held my revolver.

"We shall see about that. Commander!"

Suradar Selm came into the room. He was very handsome, but his eyes were troubled. He listened to the man and the woman explain my presence. He shook his head at me when they were done.

"You will please stand aside. We are going to the spaceship."

"No," I said.

Suradar Selm looked vaguely distressed. "You do not understand. Your ruler said we were to have the run of the city. I have only to telephone him and he will send men to have you removed. I do not want to put you in any danger."

"Except by poisoning our atmosphere," I blurted.

Drindon Holm said something in a language I did not understand. He put his hand to the narrow leather sheath at his belt. Suradar Selm sighed, and nodded his head.

The man lifted out the thin, metal rod.

My finger tightened on the trigger of the Belgian Bulldog. I shot Drindon Holm through the middle of

his forehead. He sank down even as Ted White cursed softly behind me.

"What'd you do that for? He was only . . ."

Grethlin Fort grabbed her own rod-gun. The commander brought his out of an inside pocket. I guess they were thinking the way Malcolm Newmann had thought, that I did not know what the metal rods were, that I had shot Drindon Holm in an automatic reflex action.

I pumped lead at the girl, catching her in the belly. She folded forward slowly, crying out in pain, and sank to her knees.

The commander hesitated with his metal rod in his hand.

"Drop it," I snapped.

"Oh, my God," whispered Ted White.

I didn't have to look where he was staring. The bodies of Grethlin Fort and Drindon Holm were changing shape, reverting to their natural alien bodies now that their mental controls over the molecular structuring of their bodies was relaxed by death.

I guess Suradar Selm thought he would take me by surprise. The metal rod came up, aimed at us. I fell into Ted, knocking him off his feet.

I fired while I was falling, just as beam of invisible force whooshed past my hip. My bullet took him in the thigh. I fired again as he went backward into the wall. This time I caught him in the chest.

He sagged floorward.

Ted White panted, "My God! You killed them all. But why? They weren't doing anything!"

The metal rod fell out of the commander's lax fingers. He still retained his humanoid form, but it was getting shimmery. He was dying, but he wasn't dead yet. His eyes opened and stared at me.

"How—did you know?" he breathed.

"The Un-human. The one named Drindon Holm

just said you'd received a telepathic communication from one of your fellow aliens in the spaceship. Maybe that was how. His changed mind could intercept your messages—and did. He knew what you were doing, what you meant to do here.”

“The fools! They should have destroyed it!”

“They tried. Oh, believe me, they tried. Luckily for us, they didn't succeed.”

He smiled faintly, shaking his head.

“It doesn't matter. Nothing on Earth can destroy the spaceship. Nothing, do you hear me? It's made of an alloy that even your atomic bombs cannot harm. It will sit there pouring out its gases until everybody on this planet is dead. Then a message will be sent to Andoth and my people will come across space to inhabit your world.”

His laughter rang out, harsh and fanatical.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Ted White was shaking, standing beside me.

"The bastard; the bastard," he kept repeating. His eyes swung to me. "Can't you do something, Eve?"

"Nothing," Suradar Selm said softly. "No one can do anything. The spaceship cannot be harmed. So what does it matter if you have killed a few of us? We have died in the service of Andoth."

He got more blurry. He was changing shape.

Ted stared at him, then looked at me. "If I'd been you, they'd be alive now and I'd be the dead one. How did you know enough to shoot?"

I lifted the thin metal rod. I aimed it at the alien body of the dead Grethlin Fort. I touched the firing stud. The body of the alien disappeared.

Ted White sat down, quite shaken. "I—I thought it was a communication device of some sort, that they wanted to contact the President and get him to call you off. How did you know about it?"

I told him. Then I stepped across the room, lifted the telephone and dialed The General. Hoggy got on and I asked her to put me through. I talked fast for a few moments.

"We'll start firing right away," growled the bossman.

"Suradar Selm says it won't do any good."

"We've got to do something, Eve. Maybe you'd better get over there. I'm on my way. We'll have a counsel of war."

I hung up. We'd come so far, only to meet defeat at the end of the trail. Somehow I knew the alien commander hadn't been just making sounds when he'd told me that the silver spaceship was invulnerable to any weapon we might possess. It sat there and poisoned the air, and we had to take it. I cursed softly to myself.

We went out the door and I told the police what had happened and that the Homicide Bureau would be here in a little while. We rode down in the elevator and found a taxi to take us to Dulles International Airport.

We had to get out and walk because the press of tank and cannon were too great. I saw The General and waved to him. He beckoned us over to meet some big brass and listen to them discuss ways and means.

They had been firing a few cannon at the spaceship, but nothing made a dent in its silvery surface. Nobody wanted to empty the city so an atomic bomb could be exploded; besides, I told everybody that Suradar Selm had said we had no weapon against his ship.

"All right, all right," said one of the generals. "Give the order to cease firing."

The silence was awful after that. The General who headed L.U.S.T. and the other Generals stared at one another, each one trying to discover inside himself the answer to our problem. The wind picked up and blew across the tarmac and even inside my Afghanistan coat I shivered.

"Look," said Ted White suddenly.

I saw a golden blur moving across the field. Suddenly I knew that the Un-human would know a way to rid the Earth of the spaceship, for the Un-human was in telepathic communication with it. I grabbed the General; I yelled at him to make sure nobody shot at the beast-man.

The golden giant raced across the tarmac and there was a glittering something in his hand that I recognized as the metal rod that had belonged to Pamela Frost. He

lifted the rod and fired at the silver metal that was the door of the spaceship.

The door blurred and went away and we all saw the blackness.

"My God," said The General softly.

The Un-human leaped at that blackness and went into it so that it swallowed him up. Then there was no sound but the breathing of the many thousands of men staring at the spaceship. For an hour, we watched the ship and saw nothing.

Then we heard a hum.

The ship rose upward slowly, very slowly, as if unfamiliar hands were at its controls. Faster and faster it picked up speed until it was a bright dot in the early afternoon sun. Then it disappeared.

"Get a radar fix on that thing," screamed an officer.

The General caught me by the arm. I think there were tears in his eyes as he said, "I apologize, Miss Drum. You were right and I was a bull-headed idiot."

He swung around and moved off through the crowd. Ted White put his arm about me, crowding me against his flesh.

"We have a dinner date, sweets," he growled.

I eyed him. "We do? I don't remember . . ."

He said softly, "We're going to celebrate the whole world being alive. We're going to get drunk and make love and the hell with all the other things in life."

We had dinner together at Anna Maria's, on *saltimbocca alla romano* and *cannelloni*. My heart wasn't in food at the moment, but you'd never know it from the way I chowed down. Ted was feeding his face with half his mind on what was to come between us, later in my Mayflower bed. When we talked at all, it was in monosyllables.

Finally, I said over the coffee, "I wonder where he is?"

Ted smiled faintly. "You won't be any good, think-

ing about him. Tell you what. Let's go pay your office a visit. I'll bet the General is there, keeping tabs."

My eyes lit up. I even ignored his crack about my not being any good—he meant in bed, natch—and gasped, "You mean it?"

When we got to the office, The General was all by himself, about to don his jacket. His eyes were sad, for him.

He said softly, "It's all over, Eve. He finished it the only way it could end, I guess. He must have overpowered the aliens, assumed control of the spaceship—and drove it into the sun."

"Oh, God," I breathed.

I wept a little on Ted's shoulder. Ted was very sympathetic. He let me get it all out of my system. I blew my nose, wiped my eyes in the taxi and said a little prayer for Kenneth Frost.

Ted comforted me all night long—and even through much of the following morning. I put my whole heart and soul into my embraces, not wanting him to have a bad impression of me.

The Un-human would have wanted it that way.

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It's a beastly assignment, but The Lady From L.U.S.T. never met a man—or a monster—she couldn't make or break. With bare skin and bare knuckles, Eve beats the bushes to make the monkey say uncle.